

[Elizabeth BALCH]

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AN AUTHOR'S LOVE



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BEING THE UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF
PROSPER MÉRIMÉE'S 'INCONNUE'

VOL. I

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AND NEW YORK
1889

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PROSPER MÉRIMÉE AND THE 'INCONNUE'

A WRITER in the *Quarterly Review* for January 1874 says :—" No literary event since the war has excited anything like such a sensation in Paris as the publication of the *Lettres à une Inconnue*. Even politics became a secondary consideration for the hour, and academicians or deputies of opposite parties might be seen eagerly accosting each other in the Chamber or the street to inquire who this fascinating and perplexing 'unknown' could be. The statement in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* that she was an Englishwoman, moving in brilliant society, was not supported by evidence ; and M. Blanchard, the painter, from whom the publisher received the manuscripts, died most

provokingly at the very commencement of the inquiry, and made no sign. Some intimate friends of Mérimée, rendered incredulous by wounded self-love at not having been admitted to his confidence, insisted that there was no secret to tell ; their hypothesis being that the *Inconnue* was a myth, and the letters a romance, with which some petty details of actual life had been interwoven to keep up the mystification. But an artist like Mérimée would not have left his work in so unformed a state, so defaced by repetitions, or with such a want of proportion between the parts. With the evidence before us as we write, we incline to the belief that the lady was French by birth, and during the early years of the correspondence in the position of *dame de compagnie*, or travelling companion, to a Madame M—— de B——, who passes in the letters under the pseudonym of Lady M——. It appears from one of them that she inherited a fortune in 1843 ; and she has been confidently identified with a respectable single lady residing in Paris, with two nieces, and a character for pedantry fastened on her (perhaps

unjustly) on the strength of the Greek which she learned from Mérimée.

"The extraordinary amount of interest taken in her is owing to something more than the Parisian love of scandal, gossip, or mystery. Prosper Mérimée belonged to that brilliant generation of which MM. Thiers and Guizot are the last, and he will be remembered longer than many of those by whom he was temporarily outshone. His character was no less remarkable than his genius, and the strangely-contrasted qualities that formed it will be found almost as well worth studying as his works. It was because he was an enigma when living that people are so eager to know everything concerning him when dead. Was his cynicism real or affected? Had he, or had he not, a heart? Did he, or could he, love anything or anybody at any time? Was he a good or bad man? a happy or unhappy one? These are among the problems raised by the *Letters*."

So much for the *Quarterly Review*.

In the Preface to the only existing English translation of Prosper Mérimée's *Lettres à une*

Inconnue, published by Messrs. Scribner and Co. in their Bric-a-Brac Series, and edited by Mr. R. H. Stoddard, occurs this sentence:—"The mystery which surrounds these *Letters to an Incognita*, their freshness, their epigrammatic brilliancy, their keen and flashing wit, the careless boldness with which they dash off the portraits of the leading men and women of the day, in English as well as in French society, combine to draw attention first of all to them, and they are therefore assigned the first place in this volume."

Side by side with this testimony from both an English and an American source to the interest attaching to Mérimée himself and to his writings, particularly to the story of his love and friendship for the mysterious *Inconnue*, may be placed the following extracts from M. Henri Taine's "acute and discriminating" study of his character prefixed to the original edition of the *Lettres à une Inconnue* :—

"I have several times met Mérimée in society. He was a tall, erect, pale man, who, save for his smile, had the coldly distant air of

an Englishman which checks beforehand all familiarity. Only to look at him one felt that he was either naturally or from force of habit phlegmatic, and possessed of great self-control, particularly in public, where his expression of countenance was impassible. Even in private life, when recounting some droll anecdote, his voice would remain unbroken and perfectly calm—no snap or enthusiasm. He would relate the raciest details in the most pertinent terms, but with the tone of a man asking for a cup of tea. Feeling with him was under such self-control that he appeared almost to be without any, whereas he possessed an unusual amount, but it was like a thoroughbred under the complete command of its master. The training necessary to this result began with Mérimée at an early date. When only ten or eleven years of age, having committed some slight fault, he was severely scolded and sent from the room. Weeping and sorely distressed, he had just closed the door when he heard laughter, and some one said, 'Poor child, he believed us really angry!' He was indignant

at the idea of having been a dupe ; he vowed never again to exhibit such humiliating sensitiveness, and he kept his word. ‘Remember to mistrust’ became his motto. To guard against expansion, impulse, or enthusiasm ; never to allow himself entirely full play ; reserving, as it were, a portion of himself ; to be the dupe neither of others nor of himself ; to act and write as though perpetually in the presence of an indifferent and mocking spectator, and to constitute himself this spectator,—these are the characteristics which left their impress deeply engraved upon every phase of his life, his work, and his talent.

“Mérimeé existed as an amateur ; it is impossible for one to do otherwise if possessed of a critical disposition ; by dint of reversing the tapestry one finishes by habitually seeing the wrong side, where, instead of fine personages well grouped, there are only bits of thread.

“Early in life Mérimeé possessed a comfortable competency ; then a convenient and interesting employment, the inspection of historical monuments ; and later a place in the Senate

and a position at Court. He was competent, active, and useful in respect to the monuments ; as a senator he had the good sense to be, as a rule, absent or silent ; whilst at Court he retained his independence and frankness of speech. To travel, study, and observe, to minutely investigate men and things, this was his occupation, with which his official duties in no way interfered. A man of such wit as his necessarily makes himself respected, his irony transpiercing those encased in the closest armour. He was grave, dignified, and of irreproachable demeanour when he made an academic visit or improvised a public discourse, nevertheless with it all there was a dry touch of humour which turned both orator and audience into ridicule. As candidate for the Academy of Inscriptions, he was taken to see several learned men of most formidable aspect. Upon returning from these visits he wrote :—
' Have you ever seen dogs going into the hole of a badger ? After they have had some experience, they object to the process, and sometimes come out more quickly than they

go in ; for he is not a pleasant brute to visit, your badger. I always think of a badger when I ring at the door of an academician, and in the mind's eye I see myself in exactly the same position as the dog. However, I have not yet been bitten, although I have had some odd encounters.'

"Two distinct beings existed in Mérimée—the one acquitting himself with perfect correctness in his necessary social duties ; the other holding himself apart from or above the first, watching his performances with a cynically-amused or a resigned air. Equally was there a dual spirit within him in regard to affection or sentiment. The first, the natural disposition, being good and even tender, with no superior in loyalty, no one more sure in friendship ; when he had once given his hand he never withdrew it. One sees this in a striking degree in his defence of M. Libri against the judges of the court and public opinion. It was the action of a knight who alone combats an army. Condemned to fine and imprisonment, he assumed none of the airs of a martyr, but

showed as much grace in submitting to his ill fortune as he had exhibited bravery in provoking it. And he never spoke of it, save in a Preface, and, in a manner, as an excuse, explaining that in the preceding month of July he had been obliged 'to pass a fortnight in a retreat where he was in nowise inconvenienced by the sun, and where he enjoyed profound leisure.' Nothing more, but it was like the discreet and fine smile of a gentleman.

"Mérimée never spoke of his deepest feelings, and in the *Letters* we have a correspondence first of love, later of friendship, which lasted through thirty years, yet the name of his correspondent remains unknown. By those who read these letters aright the man will be found to be gracious, affectionate, delicate, an ardent lover, and, incredible as it may seem, at times a poet, moved to the point of being as superstitious as a lyrical German. This seems so strange that one of his letters to the *Inconnue* must be cited in explanation:—'You had been so long without writing to me that I began to be uneasy, beside which I was tormented with

an absurd idea of which I have not dared write you. I was visiting the Arenas of Nîmes with the architect of the department, when I saw ten steps from me a charming bird, a little larger than a titmouse, the body light gray, with wings of red, black, and white. This bird was perched on a cornice, and it looked at me fixedly. I interrupted the architect to ask him its name. He is a great sportsman, and he told me that he had never seen any bird like it. I went nearer, and the creature did not fly away until I came close enough to touch it ; then it went and perched at some little distance, still looking at me. Wherever I went it seemed to follow me, for I found it at each story of the amphitheatre. It had no companion, and its flight was noiseless, like a night bird. The following day I returned to the Arena, and I again saw my bird. I had brought some bread, which I threw to it, but it would not eat ; then I threw it a large grasshopper, believing from the form of its beak that it would eat insects, but it seemed that this was not the case. The most learned ornithologist of the town told me that

no bird of this species existed in the country. Finally, at the last visit that I made to the place, there was my bird, still following my steps, and actually accompanying me into a dark narrow corridor, where he, a day bird, ought never to have ventured. And then I remembered that the Duchess of Buckingham had seen her husband under the form of a bird the day of his assassination, and the idea came to me that you were perhaps dead, and that you had chosen this disguise in which to come and see me. In spite of myself this *bêtise* tormented me, and I assure you that it has enchanted me to find that your letter bore the date of the day when for the first time I saw my marvellous bird.'

"This is how the heart and imagination work even in a sceptic ; it is a *bêtise*, but none the less true is it that he was on the threshold of the dream, and entering on the broad road of love.

"But side by side with the lover existed the critic, and the conflict between these two personages in the same man produced singular effects. In the case of a lover it is perhaps

better not to see too clearly. ‘Do you know,’ said La Fontaine, ‘however slightly I love, I no more see the defects of the loved ones than does a mole a hundred feet below the earth. The moment that I have a grain of love I do not fail to mix with it all the incense in my possession.’ Perhaps this explains why he was so amiable. In Mérimée’s letters harsh words are mingled with the tender ones :—‘I confess that you appeared to me much improved physically, but not at all morally ; you retain the figure of a sylph, and notwithstanding that I am *blasé* on the subject of black eyes, I have never seen finer ones either at Constantinople or Smyrna. But now for the reverse of the medal. You have remained a child in many things, and you have become in the very highest degree a hypocrite. You believe that you have great pride ; I am sorry to say it, but you possess in reality only a small vanity not unworthy a *dévoté*. Every one goes to hear sermons at present ; do you ? This would be the final touch.’ After two months of tenderness, of quarrels, and reconciliations, he writes

as follows :—‘It seems to me that every day you grow more egotistical. In the word “we” you see only “you.” The more I think of this, the more sad it seems. We are so different that we can hardly understand each other.’ It seems that he had met a character as restless, as unyielding, and as independent as his own—a *lioness though tame*—and he analyses it :—‘It is a pity that we do not see each other the day after a quarrel ; I am convinced that we should be perfectly amiable one for the other. Certainly my greatest enemy, or, if you will, my rival in your heart, is your pride ; you revolt against everything that irritates this pride ; you follow your own idea even to the smallest details. Is it not your pride that is satisfied when I kiss your hand? . . .’ After a worse quarrel than usual he writes :—‘You are one of these *chilly women of the North*, you live only by the head. . . . Adieu, since we can only love each other at a distance. When we are both old perhaps we shall meet again with pleasure.’ And then at an affectionate word from her he returns. But the opposition of

their characters is always the same throughout ; he cannot stand it, that a woman will be a woman :—‘ Why, after being for so long all that we have been to each other, must you still reflect for several days before answering the most simple question ? I never know which will win the day, your head or your heart ; you do not know yourself, but you always give the preference to your head.’

“ All these quarrels finally end in a true and lasting friendship, but do you not admire this agreeable manner of love-making ? They met at the Louvre, at Versailles, in the surrounding forests ; took long clandestine *tête-à-tête* walks together several times a week, even in January ; he admired ‘ a radiant countenance, a subtle charm, a white hand, superb black hair,’ an intelligence and attainments worthy of his own, the graces of an original beauty, the attractions of a comprehensive culture, the seductions of a charming toilette and a finished coquetry ; he breathed the perfume of an education so choice and of a nature so exquisitely refined that they epitomised for him a complete civilisation ;

in short, he was under the spell. By turns, however, the critic replaced the lover. He unravelled the meaning of a reply, of a gesture ; he detached himself from his love for the woman in order to become the judge of her character ; and he wrote her sharp truths and epigrams, which she returned in full the following day.

“ Such was Mérimée in his life, and such one finds him in his books. He wrote and studied as an amateur, passing from one subject to another as the fancy or occasion prompted him, without giving himself up to any one science or any particular theory. This was not for want of either application or ability ; on the contrary, few men have possessed more varied attainments. He possessed a natural talent for languages, and was complete master of several ; and to his knowledge of books he added extensive learning respecting monuments, understanding not only the effects, but also the technicalities of architecture. Born of a family of painters, he was accomplished as an artist in water-colours ; and in this, as in all else that

he attempted, he went to the bottom of things, having a horror of specious phrases, and writing of no subject unless with certainty of detail. He had travelled much, and carefully observed the manners and customs of not only good company but bad. With all these varied acquirements, joined to such noble faculties, Mérimée might have ranked high both in history and in art, but in the former his rank is only an average one, and in the second limited. He was distrustful, and too much distrust is hurtful. It seems that almost always he wrote merely as the occasion prompted, to occupy or amuse himself, without submitting himself to any dominating idea, or conceiving any great harmonious whole. In this, as in all else, he became first disenchanted, and finally disgusted. Scepticism produced melancholy, and in this connection his correspondence is sad. His health failed by degrees, and he wintered regularly at Cannes, feeling that life was slipping from him ; but he took great care of himself, the instinct of self-preservation being the one that remains with a man

to the end. When the railway brought him a friend he revived, and his conversation was again charming, as his letters were always, nothing being able to impair his wit, which was most exquisite and original. But he could not command happiness ; he looked at the future gloomily, and through fear of being deceived he was distrustful in life, in love, in science, and in art, and became himself the dupe of his mistrust."

Such are a few of the extracts from M. Taine's account of Prosper Mérimée ; but that, in spite of all his doubts and cynicism, the man was "capable of loving ardently," the famous *Letters to an Inconnue* prove beyond a doubt ; and they prove also that a warm love which has at one time been more than mere Platonic affection can resolve itself into a friendship faithful, tender, and loyal unto death.

One word more from the *Quarterly Review*. The writer states that when Mérimée "first formed the acquaintance of his *Inconnue* he was thirty-seven years of age, and a recognised celebrity, if not quite in the fulness of his fame.

The precise date is fixed by a letter dated Paris, February 1842, in which, apologising for not sending her some Turkish slippers, he sends a Turkish looking-glass instead :—‘ Perhaps you will like it best ; for you strike me as having become still more *coquette* than in the year of grace 1840. It was in the month of December, and you had on stockings of striped silk ; that is all I remember.’

“ The first of his letters, written in Paris and received in England, begins with a reproach :— ‘ I received your letter *in due time*. Everything about you is mysterious, and the same causes make you act in a manner diametrically opposed to that in which others would conduct themselves. You are going into the country, good ; that is to say, you will have plenty of time to write, because there the days are long, and the want of something to do is conducive to the writing of letters. At the same time the vigilance and anxiety of your dragon being less disturbed by the regular occupations of the town, you will have to submit to more questions when letters come for you. Moreover, in a

country-house the arrival of a letter is an event. Not at all, you cannot write, but on the other hand you can receive no end of letters. I begin to adapt myself to your ways, and I am no longer surprised at anything. All the same, pray spare me, and do not put to too severe a proof this unfortunate habit I have acquired, I do not know how, of approving of all that you do.

“ ‘ I have a remembrance of having been perhaps a little too frank in my last letter, when speaking to you of my character. Among my friends there is an old diplomatist, a shrewd man of the world, who has often said to me— “ Never speak ill of yourself. Your friends are safe to do so for you.” I begin to fear that you may take literally all the evil that I have said of myself. Understand that my great virtue is modesty ; I carry it to excess, and I tremble lest it may prejudice you against me.’ ”

The correspondence begins in this tone, but all the letters of Mérimée should be read in order fully to appreciate the answers of the *Inconnue*.

I

LONDON, *Tuesday.*

TO-MORROW I leave for the country, where I

ERRATA

VOL. I

- Page 15, line 19. For '*un amie,*' read '*une amie.*'
 „ 22, „ 7. For 'from to-day,' read 'from me to-day.'
 „ 44, „ 14. For '*dévouée,*' read '*dévouée.*'
 „ 46, „ 1. For 'all around me,' read 'all around us.'
 „ 52, „ 16. For '*A propos,*' read '*À propos.*'
 „ 60, „ 11. For '*pleur,*' read '*pleure.*'
 „ 75, „ 23. For 'Love me, love !' read 'Love me back !'
 „ 77, „ 10. For 'growing favourable,' read 'growing more favourable.'
 „ 91, last line. For '*a,*' read '*à.*'
 „ 114, lines 1 and 20. For 'Fraulein,' read 'Fräulein.'
 „ 148, last line. For 'larger,' read 'large.'
 „ 183, line 2. For 'not possibly,' read 'not, possibly.'

VOL. II

- Page 18, line 1. For '*plantee,*' read '*plantée.*'
 „ 120, „ 10. For 'he,' read 'it.'
 „ 159, „ 6. For '*fatalite,*' read '*fatalité.*'
 „ 183, „ 13. For 'out of the sight,' read 'out of sight.'
 „ 193, „ 9. For '*A,*' read '*À.*'

I

LONDON, *Tuesday.*

TO-MORROW I leave for the country, where I shall have but little time to write ; on the other hand, I shall hope and expect to receive no end of letters from you. The "dragon" goes with me. I am frantically busy, yet find time to think of you. Is not that *gentille* ? You know the address, so I shall look for a letter from you almost immediately.—Always most sincerely.

II

Sunday.

Your diplomatic friend was not far wrong, *mon cher*, when he advised you never to speak ill of yourself because your friends are safe to do so for you. In the face of this sage counsel why do you tell me of such a *bêtise* as your opera supper and your ball to ballet dancers,

accentuating the dots over the i's by treating me to a list of the virtues of those same frail fair ones? So you think they compare well with other women save in the one difference of poverty. *Mes compliments* upon your lady acquaintances, kindly omit me from the list. Really, the owl you mention as having hovered over you at midnight on the platform of the towers of Notre Dame failed signally in imparting the smallest particle of his traditionary wisdom to you, if you think to win my friendship by these frank declarations of a taste I find questionable. I am glad that you at least own to the fact that those women are stupid. You close your letter with asking me not to be annoyed at the picture you draw of yourself, but I am distinctly so.

III

The story you tell me of the young *figurante* who played the parts of vultures, devils, and monkeys, in order to support a dying mother, and who lived a little saint the while in spite

of the temptations and surroundings of a theatre, is a pretty one enough, and withal touching, but it does not alter my opinion of women of her class, as a class. And why, may I ask, do you begin your letter by telling me that frankness and truth are rarely good to employ towards women, and in a few lines farther on, with more frankness than politeness, ask me to tell you whether the life this same little saintly *figurante* leads (presumably when she is not personating monkey or devil) does not possess infinitely more merit than my own? Are you bent upon making me seriously angry, and is this the style in which you propose to carry on our correspondence? Do not, I implore you, provoke me so often. Have I not told you that my temper is not a good one? I think I must have been born in an east wind, I am so frightfully uncertain. Just how sorry I am for your poor mother's illness, I can hardly find words to say; I know your tender love for her, and can well understand how the anxiety of the past week must have tried you. Thank God that the danger is over.

Your postscript is most disappointing. Don't tell me seriously that I am not after all to have the *aquarelle* ; I have so set my heart upon it. Of course I send you the tapestry all the same, but that does not in the least prevent my regretting the loss of my share of the compact. Why not send the picture in any case, and let me judge of its merit ?

You are right, very right, in suggesting as a rule for general guidance—"Never select a woman for a confidante," false as I feel myself to be towards my sex in so cordially agreeing with you ; *en revanche*, however, I cannot agree with you when you assert that we are in this world only to battle against our kind, to spend our lives in a hand-to-hand fight with everything and everybody. And I much doubt whether you believe it either ; your tone in making the statement is weak, and you fall back too quickly upon your friend and his supporting Egyptian hieroglyphics. Have *you*, *par exemple*, found life all war, women all false ? *J'en doute*.

One of my relations tells me that he has

heard much of you, and that you are not all good, that your books, for instance, are decidedly bad. Is this true? Never try to deceive me. I would rather have truth at any price, even should it beggar my whole life until the end. Do you, I wonder, understand me, or shall I give you a little sketch of what I think I am for your future guidance? Suppose I try. I am very truthful, that first and foremost; loyal to a fault, with no half-hearted friendship depending upon the varying opinions of others, and changing with them. Not jealous, for I have too proud a confidence where I love, and were the confidence destroyed it would kill the love. Between these two estates there is too barren a soil for jealousy to grow in. You will probably smile at this, and call it overboastful, or very crude. If so, do not tell me that you have done so. Ah, there comes a weak spot in the sketch—the things I cannot bear to hear. On second thoughts I will leave the picture unfinished.

IV

Wednesday.

I am glad that you liked the portrait which I drew of myself, and did not find it too flattering, but would it not be wiser to wait and see it completed before pronouncing judgment? It is a heavenly day, so clear that God's own truth seems to pierce the skies above, descending in shafts of light and giving to mortals a clearer insight into people and things around them, hence my fear that your opinion of me may be over-good.

Little can you imagine the storm of indignation you aroused in me by your remark that your feelings for me were those suitable for a fourteen-year-old-niece. *Merci*. Anything less like a respectable uncle than yourself I cannot well imagine. The *rôle* would never suit you, believe me, so do not try it.

Now in return for your story of the phlegmatic musical animal who called forth such stormy devotion in a female breast, and who, himself cold and indifferent, was loved to the

extent of a watery grave being sought by his innamorata as solace for his indifference, let *me* ask the question why the women who torment men with their uncertain tempers, drive them wild with jealousy, laugh contemptuously at their humble entreaties, and fling their money to the winds, have twice the hold upon their affections that the patient, long-suffering, domestic, frugal Griseldas have, whose existences are one long penance of unsuccessful efforts to please? Answer this comprehensively, and you will have solved a riddle which has puzzled women since Eve asked questions in Paradise.

The subject interests me doubly at this moment, for my love is promised ; I am engaged. As an "uncle" you will, I hope, feel duly interested in the news, perhaps, even spare time from your many grown-up friends in Paris, those who have passed the infantile age of fourteen, and send me your good wishes. As things now are perhaps it will be wiser not to send the *aquarelle*.

V

15th September.

Is it *convenable* to begin your letter as you do, to address me as "*Mariquita de mi Alma*" just after I tell you that I am engaged, that I have made my choice for life, that I have given my love to some one else? Why will you not take me seriously? I find the matter serious enough, heaven knows ; in fact rather too solemn to suit me.

Oh, why do you write as you do when you must know that I am unhappy, wretched? Yes, I expect to be in Paris in October, but for many reasons it will be better not to see you when there. Go to your fat Flemish women ; their only recommendation to me is that they are on canvas, and not in the flesh ! Make no sacrifices for me by remaining in Paris instead of going to Antwerp, it will be time doubly lost, for you will lose the sight of your pictures and not be blessed with a glimpse of me. I am quite decided that it will be better not to meet. But send me the *aquarelle* by all means. I have

changed my mind as to that, and can see no good reason why I should not have it. So you have decided that it is to be the monk after all, not Valasque's infant Marguerite. In what way did you spoil the copy of this latter? I am grasping, I should have liked both.

The idea of seeing you in October tempts me strongly, but there are grave reasons why I should not do so. No, my time then will all be taken up in getting my trousseau; you know there is nothing on earth women love so much as shopping.

How I wish this horrible rain would stop. It is getting on my nerves, I seem to feel each drop on my heart, and I am sure a deep indenture of some kind will be worn into that sensitive organ. But rain indentures would at least be clean, that is some comfort; and they cannot leave any ache behind them, poor little harmless washed-out things.

I have a surprise in store for you, that is, unless between now and October I do not change my mind and decide not to tell you of it. You may judge from that last sentence

that I have changed my mind upon another subject, and intend after all to see you ; but you are mistaken, it was a mere slip of the pen. I am convinced that it would be so infinitely wiser for us not to meet.

It is Sunday, and the church bells at this moment are ringing loudly, and horribly out of tune. They too, like the rain, would get upon my nerves if their hideous discord lasted much longer. I will go to church, and see if the services can exorcise the demon of unrest which seems to possess me. Thank God *mon futur* is not here ; he left for London yesterday. But I forget, you take no interest in him, in which you are wrong, for he is a most estimable young man. Would I marry him if he were not? In no way can I agree with you that the fact of being bound is of itself sufficient to preclude the possibility of true love. The idea is a horrible one, and if accepted would destroy all the moral foundations of society. As to your further suggestion that being bound to some one else would almost inevitably have the result of making me care for you, I treat it

with the scorn which it deserves. Adieu. Enjoy Amsterdam ; worship at the shrine of Rubens, and try in Antwerp Cathedral to gain a few Christian ideas as well as suggestions of colour and flesh tints.—Your friend always.

VI

30th September.

“ Love excuses all, but we must be quite sure that it is love.” These words of your letter are, I think, the saddest you ever wrote, the saddest any one could write. What infinite possibilities they suggest, what boundless sorrow, when the awakening shall come and one discovers the paltry imitations which one has mistaken for the original, the base coin believed to be sterling gold. How can one ever be sure of finding real love when the devil himself has not half the disguises love can assume at command, and Satan’s imagination, lively as it is, grows absolutely uninventive in comparison with Cupid’s ? And yet, on the other hand, may not too much caution lose one the best thing life

can give, leaving in exchange regret and remorse as one's twin companions to the grave?

Oh, *how* sad you have made me! There is not enough backbone, moral or physical, in my whole nature to throw off the load of sadness which you have with those few words laid upon it.

You tell me that you too are *triste*, and moreover ill, and that adds to my own depression. I am glad that we are returning to London to-morrow; any change is welcome to me when one's mind is at a palsied standstill such as mine has reached, even a fog instead of sunshine, or muddy pavements in place of grassy fields.

And so you have determined to stop on in Paris in spite of my repeated assurances that I will not meet you there. You say you will see me, or not see me, as I may choose, but believe me when I tell you I have already chosen, and firmly decided, that it is best not to see you. Why shall I not confess the truth once and for ever? I am afraid of you. There, are you satisfied? Is your vanity preening its feathers

like a peacock in the sun? Does a soothing satisfaction flow through your veins and bring a placid expression to your features? All this ought by rights to be the result of my candid confession, and I make no doubt it is. Well, much good may it do you. To me it proves the fact that I am above all things magnanimous. I return you good for evil, in giving you pleasure in exchange for the unutterable sadness which you have given to me. It grows and deepens as I write, this dreary sadness, it hurts me almost to tears. "Love excuses all, but we must be quite sure that it is love." Ah, how could you write such words, or how, once written, could you have the heart to send them to me, weighted as they are with the demons of doubt and mistrust, with fear, sorrow, unrest, agony, despair, temptation! Ay, there comes the sting, they tempt me. And you send them to represent yourself, the tempter! How dare you?

See you in Paris—no, never. Promise me to burn all the letters I have written to you, I wish it.

I must make still another confession to you. I have bearded the lion in his den, gone in person to see M. V——, and persuaded him to write to you. It needed some courage to do this, as you can imagine, but what I have still to tell needs more.

But it is best to be frank about it and confess the truth. I read the letter which he entrusted me with for you. Are you very angry? Do you find me beneath contempt, or will you forgive me? With this mortifying statement, which conscience compels me to make, I think I had better close. If you are unforgiving this shall be my last letter.

If you like I will send you a "*schizzo*."

VII

LONDON, 3d October.

Your long silence had almost convinced me that being unable to pardon my indiscretion in reference to M. V——'s letter, you had determined to let my last epistle remain the last, as I had hinted. Judge of my delight,

therefore, when this morning as I was going for a melancholy walk in a still more melancholy drizzle, the postman and I met face to face on the doorstep, and in a moment the dear familiar handwriting greeted my eyes. With what eagerness did I break the seal, tear open the envelope, and seek the first words; and how thankful, how grateful, was I to your forgiving heart in that you had made them what they are. It shows how anxiously guilty I had been, that the proportionate relief should be so great. You say that you want "*un ami féminin*." In consequence of the curious construction of your language I cannot translate that sentence into English, we having but one gender for the word friend. I wonder the French who are so clever in most things did not manage a little more cleverly in this. Is it not awkward sometimes to speak of "*un amie*" when from obvious reasons "*un ami*" would suit one's purpose infinitely better? "*Un ami féminin*," although rather a contradiction of terms, has the merit of originality, and I adore originality. Further, I am immensely

flattered that you think I could fill this want and become this original sexless thing. *Donc*, I accept. I will be your "*ami féminin*." The position solves so many difficulties, and you promise so energetically never to fall in love with me, that there can be no danger. I believe you would make a friend worth having, that you would be loyal as you are noble, and, best of all, be uninfluenced by others. It will be good to have such a friend, and I promise to be faithful in return. How a few words can change the face of nature. Since reading your letter the melancholy mist itself seems almost cheerful, so much sunshine is in my heart I do not feel the want of it in the outside world. I walked through the damp streets feeling so light and springy that it was with difficulty I kept my feet upon the ground. (Will that sentence convey the slightest idea to your mind of what I really mean?) The two or three friends I met must have thought me rather mad, for I answered their questions at random, thinking the while of your proposition, "*un ami féminin*." *I* to be that to *you*! It

means so much—I wonder if to you it means just the same that I imagine it to be? We must talk it over, for now I think we might meet. I really think so ; there would be no danger. With your absurd reasons for the fact that it would be impossible for me to fall in love with you I do not agree at all, they are unworthy of you, and I shall not discuss them. Why do you so malign yourself? I being your friend now can ask such questions. I like it, this appointment of "*ami féminin*"; nothing has ever happened to me in my life which has pleased me more, perhaps not so much. Any woman can be a wife, or *une maitresse*, according to her views upon such subjects, but so few can be a true friend. Will you think me boastful if I say that I believe I possess many of the qualities which go to make a real friend? Not the weak, pulseless, forceless thing which so often usurps the name, but an honest, loyal, helpful soul, that lives and feels and suffers and dares, yet does not change ; steadfast amid good report and evil report ; true in word and in deed ; tender in weakness,

and generous in pain. Tell me, is my idea yours?

Yes, I pity you (as your friend) for the *mille raisons* which you tell me make you sad. Let me share them with you, and divide their heavy weight. What is a friend good for unless for this?—*Votre ami féminin*.

P.S.—Do you know I have been quite ill?

VIII

Friday.

AMIGO DE MI ALMA—Your last letter ought by rights to have made me very angry, for in it you take not the slightest notice of my consent to become your friend; you tell me as though it were something new to you that Lady M—— has told you of my approaching marriage, say that in consequence of this you will burn my letters, ask me to do the same with yours, and bid me an eternal adieu. Of what can you be thinking? Did I not tell you frankly of my engagement, and was it not *after* that announcement that I promised to be

your friend? Have you never received that letter, and is that perhaps the explanation of the curiously abrupt reticent production which has just been handed to me purporting to be from you? I confess to being sorely puzzled. The "*schizzo*" is ready, and I would forward it to Pall Mall, to M. V——'s care, only I much fear that curiosity may tempt him to examine it, which I should not like. Advise me what to do about it. I will at once send to him for the picture you mention.

Do you know, I pity you, for your letter leads me to believe that you are either suffering and ill, or else diabolically cross. Either state is bad enough for the person most concerned, but I think the latter is worse in its consequences to others. And I pity myself, for you have made me cross, and worst of all do I pity the unfortunate man who is to marry me. *Dieu!* his lot will, I much fear, not be an enviable one. Women of my nature ought not to marry; it is a mistake. I wonder why I do it?

I had meant not to allude to the ridiculous

story of a diamond, the "false stone" with which you fill your letter. No more than yourself do I understand why you should take the trouble of telling me this story, nor why you should go out of your way to veil the identity of a woman (for of course the "false diamond" was a woman) under such a transparent allegory. One thing which you tell me I can quite believe, namely, that the figure of rhetoric, called irony, is entirely under your control. I beg that you will never try its effect upon me. Why should we quarrel as we do? *Trève d'hostilités*, let us be really friends, it is much simpler, so restful where everything seems uncertain. Do you remember once asking me a question to which I would give no answer? Well, let it remain unanswered, *mais*——

MARIQUITA.

IX

LONDON, *Thursday*.

Impossible to write anything worth reading to-day, for I am ill, and in consequence blue

devils are rampant. I think it is partly this suicidal fog which has upset me ; certainly this is not a 'cheery place in November. I am going to have my portrait painted for you, and will not forget your suggestion that when it is being done I shall think of you as *Amigo de mi Alma*.

X

9th November.

Yes, I am much better ; many thanks for your sympathy. You say that I have no heart ; *ma foi*, I believe you are about right ! I begin to believe also that one gets along tolerably well with whatever may take the place of that portion of one's being when the rightful tenant vacates. You see, *mon beau moquer*, your teachings are not all thrown away upon me. I do retain a little of the much wisdom lying in your cynical reflections, and in course of time you may actually be proud of your pupil.

My portrait is not bad, now that it is finished. Shall I send it to you care of M. V——, or forward it direct to Paris ?

Why will you harp on the story of your diamond? What do I care whether she be false or true! Pour a little acid over her and find out; if she stands the test, good; if not, and she should shrivel up and disappear, why, better still. You see she bores me. Adieu.

XI

November.

Are you equal to a long long letter from to-day, dear friend; shall you be able to stand pages of all sorts of fears and imaginings, a full soul-communion of my heart with yours? I acknowledge the justice of your reproaches, and feel that my letters lately have been short and doubtless unsatisfactory. You accuse me of being unable to say, "*J'ai tort*"—but there you are wrong. Not only can I confess frankly that I am mistaken, but I can add the words which to many people are harder still to say—I am sorry. I would not give much for either a man or woman who could not, for there would unquestionably be something very wrong

about them. There is a good deal of common sense in some of the old saws, such as, "Honest confession is good for the soul," and "*Peccato confessato è mezzo perdonato*," and half a dozen more in as many different languages. There is something very real and soothing in that odd warm glow which comes to one's heart in gentle swelling waves of feeling after the fault has been confessed, or the misunderstanding cleared away, and the kiss of perfect pardon and glad comprehensiveness has consecrated and sealed anew the friendship or the love. He who has never felt this weight of doubt or vexation lifted, and the warm trustful belief born again all fresh and holy, has missed one of the purest joys to be tasted upon earth. I pity those who cannot say frankly and freely "I am sorry," for the three small words possess a mighty magic for softening angry suspicion, and healing sore and wounded feelings where grander phrases would be powerless. But why should all natures be alike? It would make the old saws useless if they were, and deprive us of one of the truest of them all, "Variety is the spice of life."

How terribly monotonous it would be if all the flowers were roses, every woman a queen, and each man a philosopher. My private opinion is that it takes at least six men such as one meets every day to make one really valuable one. I like so many men for one particular quality which they may possess, and so few men for all. *Comprenez-vous?* Shall I ever understand all your characteristics, I wonder, for that you are a being of many different phases, more, far more, than are given unto the majority of mortals, I am convinced even by our short acquaintance. One of my male friends I like because he brings me *bonbons*, always doing so at the precise moment when my inner man craves that particular form of sustenance; another helps to illuminate the groping darkness of my mind as to a future state, his strong faith giving me a strength which I would not barter for untold sums of gold; yet another wholly disapproves of me, but the forceful almost brutal way in which he tells me home truths and exposes all my personal idiosyncrasies, affects me like a bracing

tonic which I would not be without. And yet again there is one who finds me perfect, and so cunningly does he word his creed of my perfections that it penetrates my heart with sweet conviction, while my spirit acknowledges the profoundness of his discrimination in almost grovelling gratitude ; one I am persuaded cannot possess a teaspoonful of brains in the whole space of his cranium, but he whistles divinely, and in certain moods he stands the favourite. And so on through them all, yet not one of the long list knows how to love me as I would be loved, not one has been able to call forth love as love should be, from my capricious heart. Is that perchance the *rôle* fate destines you to play, my unknown, mysterious friend ? *Nous verrons.*

My God, I am engaged ! Both the fact and its corresponding man had entirely escaped my memory.

You will call me flippant, if this letter reaches you when in a serious mood ; or dull, should it find you bored with life. Is it not a trifle dangerous, this experiment we are trying of a friendship in pen and ink and paper ? A letter.

What thing on earth more dangerous to confide in? Written at blood heat, it may reach its destination when the recipient's mental thermometer counts zero, and the burning words and thrilling sentences may turn to ice and be congealed as they are read. Or, penned in irritation and anger, they may turn a melting mood to gall, and raise evil spirits which all future efforts may be powerless to exorcise. Ten thousand devilries may lie unsuspected among the hastily-scribbled words or carefully-thought-out phrases, destined to play unutterable havoc when the seal shall be broken and the contents disclosed. A letter ; the most uncertain thing in a world of uncertainties, the best or the worst thing devised by mortals. Were I beside you and said a stupid thing, the quick contraction of your forehead would warn me of my blunder ; or if the thought were good and you should find it worthy, how soon the sudden light in your eyes or the amused line about your mouth would make me know your thoughts. I can hear your answer to this suggestive sentence. You will say at once,

"Then meet me. Think no more of these absurd reasons which you cannot even explain, but which you persist in regarding as insurmountable," and so on, until you make yourself angry, and me remorseful. Alas, it is not possible ; circumstances are too strong for me, and it is not wholly want of courage on my part, as you seem to think. If it ever is, this much-talked-of meeting, it will be your talisman on the "*peleton de fil*" which brings it about, not

MARIQUITA.

P.S.—Remember that in the fairy tale of Prince Ahmed the clue of thread was to roll till it reached the gates of the castle ; when it stopped four lions were to be seen, awake and roaring, but a bribe of food thrown to them rendered them safe to pass !

XII

(Letter missing)

XIII

LONDON, 12th December.

You are really here, actually in London ! Is the same sunless sky above your head and mine,

the same *triste* atmosphere around us both? Ah, was it wise to come? "*L'homme propose, Dieu dispose.*" At any time after five o'clock you will find me.

XIIIA

LONDON, 17th December 1840.

There are some happinesses so great Satan cannot pardon them, and they do not come from God. They are the origin of all the tortures and scourgings which have been dealt to human souls since the world began, or since penitence existed. My scourging has commenced in the misery of your absence; will it end there? Words cannot say how I miss you and miss the delight of being with you. I am nervous, overwrought, defiant, reckless, in a word, just in that tragic state of mind when the very last thing I should do is what I am doing, putting my tumultuous thoughts on paper. A faint glimmer of reason tells me this, but is not sufficiently strong to restrain me from the folly. Do not answer me in the

same tone, do not take me *au sérieux*, do not mention my engagement, which I have broken—perhaps the one act of my life which deserves commendation. Write me one of your airy unserious letters, with no deep meaning to it, like a cool fresh hand laid lightly on a burning head tormented with sick fancies and evil dreams. Not too dear a hand, which would thrill one with its touch, or distress one lest its owner should tire in the act of standing by the couch and ministering to the pain, but one that is only kind and compassionate, belonging to a good dear soul who would not have you turn and thank him, or bid him rest, only wishing you to sleep and forget. Ay, forget. Memory is counted a good thing to possess, but is not forgetting a far higher art, a vastly better thing? Yet not for all the world could give would I forget the bliss unspeakable of the days just past. Write to me, as I have said, lightly, taking no heed of my tragic gloominess. My head aches, I long for the cool compassionate hand,—*A toi toujours*.

XIV

CHÂTEAU BEAUSÉJOUR,

16th February 1842.

Shall you be glad to hear from me again, *cher ami*? I answer the question for myself, and write. As you will see by the heading of my letter, I am with our kind old friend Madame de C——, but in a day or two I go to England for a short visit, after which my plans are uncertain. You promised me once some souvenirs of your Eastern travels (not the Turkish slippers; those I still refuse); send them to me here, before I leave. From England I will send you a “protocol” in some measure outlining our future relations; do you not find the idea a rather wise one? I am well, and very happy at the prospect of hearing from you again, perhaps seeing you, of that anon. When in England I go direct to Castle D——, Lord D——’s place in Surrey, which they tell me is one of those houses best worth seeing in the country. I will give you no news of myself until I hear from you, and although your letter will, I hope,

reach me here, I shall not answer it until I reach D——. Madame de C—— begs me to send *mille amitiés de sa part*. Shall I sign myself
MARIQUITA?

XV

D—— CASTLE, SURREY,
March 1842.

Where have I read that the gift of a mirror is either the most delicate compliment or the most deliberate insult? With what you will probably be pleased to term my "infernal coquetry," I choose to flatter myself that the lovely thing you call "*un miroir Turc*," and which came to me quite safely before I left the Château Beauséjour, is meant as the former. Thank you so much; it is a million times better than the slippers. When you mentioned comfitures of rose, bergamot, and jasmine, it sounded more like food for angels than for mortals cursed with digestions, but oh, the sticky sweetness of the dreadful things, how can you like them? Frankly, they are not to my taste. One jar I gave, as you told me, to Madame de

C——, and she said far more amiable things about it than I possibly can, if I am to retain any regard for veracity. But thank you again so much for the mirror.

A curious thing has happened to me. An old gentleman—and not so very old either—who knew me from babyhood died suddenly, and left me all his fortune. Why, he alone knew, and as he has taken the knowledge with him to that place from which no traveller returns, small chance exists of any one else ever being enlightened as to his motives. I can hardly understand my new estate as yet, and strangely enough do not feel tempted to spend a penny of my unaccustomed wealth. I should have thought that any one blessed with the extravagant tastes which I possess, after having had them repressed all through life, would rush into wild expenditure, buy everything, and throw money away senselessly, but this absence of all desire to spend anything, in me of all living people, is incomprehensible. I suppose it is the first strangeness of knowing that I could be lavish if I would. I think I

should like to travel, I have seen so few places or things, and the world contains so many. Write me a long account of your journeyings, and tell me what is best worth the time spent upon it. I have a fancy to go to different countries, not as a mere tourist, to "do the sights" in as short a time as possible, but to settle for some length of time in some one attractive spot, to study the languages in the countries they severally belong to, and study the people, their ways and national characteristics, at the same time. What think you of my idea? I feared that my last letter would anger you, and was not therefore astonished at your not answering it. The protocol I felt sure you would disapprove of; all the same, I think that I did right in sending it.¹ See how forgiving I am for your total disregard of it, I write humbly asking your advice as to the disposition of myself and my new importance in the coming years, answer me nicely, and send me that little history of yourself and your journeyings.

¹ The letter referred to is evidently lost.

This old castle of Lord D—— is delicious ; how I wish you could enjoy it with me. It is positively steeped and saturated in memories, the walls have grown gray with all that they have seen and heard, the very stones seem mellow with the patience and humbleness which hoary old Time alone can bring. So much has happened here, so many great ones of the earth have lived and died in these wide wainscoted rooms and shadowy corridors and noble halls, that I wonder visible palpable spirits do not meet one at every turn. I almost wish they did, and that they would stop and tell us of the buried past, and whether it is true that they think the present is puny and bloodless, the life of to-day a mere faint copying of the good old times so stirring and bold.

To-morrow I return to London, but only for a day or two. Write to me there as soon as you receive this, if you are not still ill-tempered. —Adieu. *Je vous aime.*

XVI

PARIS, 11th March 1842.

I left London suddenly, and have been here for the past three days, but purposely have not let you know. To-night I leave Paris for Italy with Madame C——. Your charming letter reached me just before I left London, and the account of your travels makes me long still more to see foreign lands, therefore I go. You ask me if I have changed, and add that you are impatiently waiting for me to become "*moins jolie*" before again meeting me. To punish you for this wicked wish I will tell you that I am *not* "*moins jolie*" than when you saw me last. My mirror, your delightful Turkish one, tells me decidedly a flattering tale which I should not have mentioned to you but for this unholy wish of yours. I believe I could rival your beauty of Saragosa should we meet. As a small souvenir I send you a purse, but feel obliged to confess that I did not embroider it myself.—*Au revoir.*

XVII

Wednesday, April 1842.

You actually saw me when I was in Paris and yet did not speak to me! How can you own to such a baseness? It is just as well that you add the statement that the feeling which prevented you from doing so was "*mesquin*." It may have been my "satanic pride," as you forcibly put it, which made me pass through without telling you, but pray what term would you apply to your own conduct in seeing me, half coming to speak to me, and then letting me go my way in silence whilst silently going yours? Do not write to me of egotism and hypocrisy if calmly and in cold blood you did this thing. Must we always quarrel? No, you have not the right to scold me, as in a little spasm of repentance later on in your letter you wisely mention. If you could but know all! I had no time before leaving Paris to let you know at what date we expect to be in Naples. Madame de C—— is an uncertain mortal like myself, therefore our united plans

are doubly uncertain. I will ask her if she remembers the occasion you mention, but that you upon any occasion ever played the rôle of "*niais*" I cannot believe. I am half sorry now that I did not let you know I was in Paris. It being morally impossible to go back to that time and to decide anew and differently, I can say this without consequences. But only in speech can I tell you of my experiences of the last two years, not on paper. The phases of wifehood and widowhood safely passed, the change in the woman's "legal status" which long ago you told me invariably affected her for the worse. Will you find it so, I wonder, in my case? *Eh bien*, we have not met, the tale is not yet told, and as yet you can know nothing. I half long, half dread, to meet you, so great is the gulf that has opened and widened and closed between us since those sunless golden December days in London.

XVIII

Perhaps I have remained childish in many things, and very glad am I if because of this

fact I can be childishly delighted at your saying that my eyes please you, that they even compare favourably with those of the beauties of Constantinople and Smyrna, to whom you have doubtless said so many more amiable things than you say to me. Why waste your time in repeating so often that I am a hypocrite? In your heart of hearts you know the statement is cruelly untrue, yet in the face of this you quote my own language to me in Jonathan Swift's immoral maxim—"A lie is too good a thing to be wasted"—thinking by it to convince me of the care with which you employ a lie. I send you an essence; translate the word into its real meaning and cease reproaching me because I am trying to do what I believe to be right.

(The remainder of this letter is missing.)

XIX

(Missing)

XX

D——, 10th July 1842.

While you are amusing yourself at Avignon I am leading the quietest and most studious life possible in this tiny Swiss village lost among mountains and lakes, where I walk and row and swim for exercise, lest too much learning should drive me mad. I am trying to master Greek, and am at the same time reading Pope's translation of Homer. In time, if the quiet of my present life continues, I may accomplish something. You give me no definite news about your chance for becoming one of the immortals. It is the only kind of immortality I wish for you just yet. To see you an Academician would give me immense pleasure and pride, to lose you from this life would, I think, kill me, or, worse than that, leave me to live with life's light extinguished. I felt sure that you would read my expression aright, and knew that by "essence" I meant friendship. But here, in this quiet spot so far removed from the falseness of the world, so near to

God's heaven where truth shines in the blue of the sky above and is reflected in the crystal waters below, touching the white mountain-tops as they reach far beyond the delusions of earth, here with the very air breathing truth in its pure freshness untainted by contact with earth or things earthy, some inward force stronger than myself compels me to write that which I know will make you angry, and you will answer with scornful cynical words, which will cut and hurt me. Yet even knowing this, perhaps because of knowing it, the truth around me in sky and air and crystal water forces me to speak. It is not only friendship that I feel, but love so strong that every good resolution I have made snaps like glass in frosty weather. Therefore I see but one way to end the struggle—half measures are useless, I must break off everything. If I write to you, I say what I have promised myself not even to think ; if I see you, it is worse still. You have told me your story of the *pain blanc* and the *pain bis* at the very moment when it does me good in helping me to see things clearly, not

exactly the effect you intended it to have perhaps, but the one which of itself it has had. We must meet no more, and I must write to you no more. Nothing is left me to give you save my prayers, and for all good and for every blessing these shall be yours.—Adieu.

XXI

D——, 29th July 1842.

I give it up—you are incorrigible—you are past praying for! Let us be friends again as before. Our journey to Italy must be much later than I hoped; *en attendant* I daily go deeper into Greek, and am becoming much interested in it. I send this to Paris, as it is, I fancy, too late now to catch you at Avignon.

XXII

D——, 5th September 1842.

Quel conte de fées is this you tell me *à propos* of a mysterious female travelling alone with

you for upwards of some fifty hours or so? Are you emulating the pious and most moral ~~Dean Swift~~ *Stowe* in your old age, and shall you write a history of still another "sentimental journey"? I can only trust that a kind Providence will protect you as it did him, and that with him you will be able devoutly to exclaim, your eyes raised to heaven and gratitude filling your heart the while, "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." Shall you take this *aventure de voyage* as the foundation for that new moral novel of which you spoke to me in your last letter? I send you a scrap of my Greek writing, let me know if you can decipher it.—*Mille amitiés.*

XXIII

D—, 12th October.

We are just leaving this quiet spot where I have passed through several phases of feeling in regard to you.

The time spent here has been one of those pauses in life which are, I think, given to

mortals for a purpose. One of those intervals where, if they will but face the music and answer honestly the questions conscience puts to them, those answers must of necessity prove how they have used the limitless freedom granted them as individual free agents. The choice between good and evil which, when closely looked into, assumes an appalling responsibility, has been their own willing choice, and nothing further is left for them to do but manfully abide the issue. The only trouble is, that if the pause be too long and the examination prove unsatisfactory, a restlessness follows, and, like the possessed one in the parable, "The last state of that man is worse than the first." Self-introspection may be useful at times, doubtless it is so, but I hold strongly to the belief that in no case can fruitless looking back be of any avail. No regret or remorse can undo the past; the record of each act is written and sealed and closed for ever. Why waste the strength of the present in useless repinings, in utterly futile wishes for the "might have been"? The second stage of the pause has come to me,

and an intolerable restlessness possesses me. To-morrow we leave the mountains and this chilly clarified air of crystal truth, betaking ourselves we do not quite know where, perhaps Italy, perhaps Paris.

Are there any good Greek novels to be had? You once suggested that I would end by becoming an author, but have no fear. I may have committed many follies, and may commit still more before the time allotted me for follies has gone to swell the roll of years, but that weakest of all weaknesses, that crowning folly of follies, writing a book, can at least never be laid to the door of *Votre amie dévouée*.

XXIV

PARIS, *Wednesday, October 1842.*

I am here, but contrary to your expectation; you see I tell you of the fact. My cousin, Madame G—— and my brother are both with me.

XXV

Thursday.

Your note has just come. Enchanted to accept your *loge* at the Italian's to-night. My brother will accompany me. MARIQUITA.

XXVI

Sunday Evening, October 1842.

"A Roland for your Oliver." You told me once of a dream that you had had ; of a garden in Valencia, where I was with you, and where you spoke a language which in your waking hours you do not understand, and attempted to do a deed which in reality would be impossible to you, namely, to crush to death a woman (your false diamond) with a heavy stone from the wall above. Now hear my dream, which made last night one long hour of bewildered misery to me. As in yours, we two were alone together in some strange country, unlike any I have ever seen, with wide, far-reaching deserts

all around me, rippling with fine golden sand, hot and glinting in the sun. The sky was of a blue which seemed to live, so fervid was it, so penetrating in the warmth, and depth, and richness of its colour, while not a cloud broke the evenness of its sapphire surface. No trees were there of any kind save only one, but that one so perfect in its slender symmetry, so delicate in the tender tinting of its drooping feathery branches, each one a wide long leaf divided into thin pointed smaller leaves, the whole a thing of such exquisite and matchless beauty that I knew I stood beneath an Eastern palm. The still loveliness of the scene was marred only by one unsightly object, but that a ghastly one. Bleached and dry the gaunt skeleton of a camel lay on the glistening sand, its whitened bones, which were picked clean by carrion birds, telling in their bare mute stillness of the noble-hearted beast who had bravely struggled on with weakening limbs and failing breath, courageously keeping up with the caravan laden with costly stuffs and fragrant spices, the treasured products of other lands which were

being brought back across long miles of desert wastes. Telling so pitifully also of how at last the limbs refused to carry the brave heart farther, of how the laboured breath fluttered painfully, giving one great sigh of almost human pain, then stopped for ever. But not before a suffering also almost human had come to the spirit of the great awkward beast, who, with dying eyes turning slowly from side to side, watched the halt made by the caravan, and heard the order given to unload the bags of silks and spices which it had carried so far, to take off the trappings and coloured worsted tassels of which it had been so proud, and saw all these borne away and placed on other beasts, strong and still of use. Then came the order to go forward, and the endless line of camels and men and gay brilliant colours stretched out along the sand, growing smaller and smaller as they went on towards friends and welcome and home, until at last there was only a speck in the far distance, each moment growing smaller and smaller still until it was gone, and nothing remained but sand and sky and deadly burning

heat. Haply the glazing eyes grew dim and sightless before those other different specks against the vivid blue took form and shape and came steadily nearer, the ghoulish carrion birds. In my dream you stood beneath the palm alert and wakeful, but a strange dull apathy stole slowly over me in the sultry noon-day heat, and I could not clearly see the bright forms coming suddenly out of space, lovely women from all four corners of the world, hair all golden, or burnished bronze, or richest black, eyes of all colours flashing brilliant glances, and laughing, tempting lips calling softly in tones like fairy music. They were all around us, these witching shapes of beauty, but so drowsy was I, that I heard and saw too vaguely to really comprehend, until at last my heavy eyes half closed, your face the last and only one I looked upon, and even when the sleep-drugged lids dropped wholly, the impress of your features was still beneath them as I fell into a deep dreamless calm. When I awoke (in my dream) it was cool still starlight, and I waked so gently that only my eyes unclosed, my body did not

move. The palm still reached towards heaven in soft faint dusky lines, and a light breeze stirred the feathery leaves which at mid-day had not moved. I spoke your name, but no answer disturbed the starlit stillness, and I thought that perhaps you too slept. Slowly remembrance of the waking day came back to me, and the lovely forms of the tempting women grew distinct and brilliant to my mind as they had not seemed when actually before my eyes. The music voices seemed to call you still, but far, far off, like distant echoes. I started up, and the second time spoke your name with sharp distinctness which seemed to cut the stillness of the night like a pointed instrument. Only my own voice answered me, and I looked wildly around. The bones of the dead camel gleamed ghostly white, the palm was beside me in its exquisite beauty, the star-studded heaven above, the waste of desert all around, but you were gone, I was alone. With a piercing cry I awoke, trembling and cold. Will you interpret my dream for me? you know that I have never refused anything that you

have asked. How good of you to say that you have an Etruscan seal for me ; I will use it in sealing my letters to you, but never when I write to others.

XXVII

So you do not interpret my dream after all, only wonder where I have learned that you have friends in the four quarters of the globe, and add the monstrous fable that in reality you possess but one in Spain, or as you idiomatically express it, "*je n'en ai qu'un ou qu'une à Madrid.*" The number strikes me as modest for a man of your undoubted merit, but then I know that you are modest, and moreover discreet with a discreetness far beyond that generally vouchsafed to your sex. Your original idea of the three heads amuses me vastly, and I am puzzling the one which I know to be actually fastened upon my own shoulders with vain imaginings as to what third quality can possibly remain in me which is worthy to join those of a coquette and a diplomatist.

Are you really ill, or do you say so merely to excite my compassion, which for you, as well you know, flows in a plenteous stream at a moment's notice? No, you looked far too vigorous the other day for it to be possible that illness and you have aught in common. The impression you then left upon me was so perfectly agreeable a one, that in justice to you and to myself I find it wise to leave it undisturbed. You could never again, I believe, be so delightful, and in order that this impression may remain unspoiled and tenderly enshrined within my memory, I have decided not to see you again during the remainder of my stay in Paris.

XXVIII

PARIS, *November* 1842.

As we seem to be remaining on here indefinitely, ten thousand annoying things having arisen to prevent, for the moment at least, the Italian journey, I write to you again. The sentence in your last letter telling me that you

are really ill, touched my heart, which, believe me, is not so hard as you suppose it to be, only somewhat curiously constituted, and probably different from those belonging to other women you have met.

I quite long for the seal you have promised me ; it exactly suits my fancy. You must one day when we meet (should we ever meet again) tell me the meaning of the device. In return I will explain to you the seal I generally use—a six-sided one having mottoes in French, English, Italian, Arabic, Latin, and German. The number, you see, allows of two for each of my three characters, Diplomatist, Coquette, and that mysterious third whose title you so cruelly withhold from me. *A propos* of German, I send you a little song, “Das Lied des Clærchens,” which I have copied out myself, only the end, the very end, I have not written. Some day that too I must tell you. They seem to be accumulating, these bits of information which can only be imparted orally, not by pen and pencil. If only I could be sure that you would be as charming as you were at our last meeting,

I would without hesitation name the hour for another, but, pardon my saying so, you are just the least trifle uncertain. Look into my eyes and tell me if this be not the truth.

You remember Madame de P—— and her *mauvaise langue* and abominable rudeness to me some time ago? Well, precisely Madame de P—— did I meet to-day when strolling through the gallery of the Louvre, and had she been my dearest friend she could not have shown more pleasure in encountering me. She seemingly ignored completely that anything but the most cordial relations had ever existed between us; apparently had quite forgotten that her language, both to me and of me, had been anything but parliamentary, in a word, deported herself entirely as a good friend, while I know that she has been, and probably still is, one of my most unscrupulous enemies. How can you account for the fact that instead of being enraged at her hypocrisy I was merely amused, after a slow unexcited fashion, at her entire change of tactics? She is a worldly woman, and to a certain extent a clever one, therefore she has

reasons for the change which she feels it is worth her while to make, and it is deliberately that she forgets and ignores any past unpleasantness. Again I ask, Why was I agreeable to that woman? For I was; agreeable not in the sense of putting myself out in any way, but I did not snub her, as she had every right to expect that I should; I did not make her new *rôle* at all difficult for her, on the contrary, I rather helped her over the stile as I would have helped a lame dog who had once bitten me. I believe that there must be a certain altitude of cool comfortable indifference which if once reached by mortals renders them positively delightful. They become convinced that life is too short and people in general too unimportant to allow the one to be disturbed, or the other to disturb them, and as a consequence no one has power to irritate them, or vex them, or move them to violent emotion of any kind, while they in turn grow placidly inclined towards every one. This really is the only argument I can find to explain my agreeable delightfulness to Madame de P——, who, I am certain, thought me all of

that. There was no forgiving Christian charity in it; no slightest wish to resume our old friendly relations; only the most absolute indifference. I should not care if I never saw her again, but if I met her to-morrow I should be just as agreeable to her as I was to-day.

A ring has come at the outer door of the apartment. What unqualified happiness would be my portion at this moment if I could be certain that within the next I should see you, hear you speak, and look into your eyes; if I could be sure that your hand had rung the bell, and that quickly I should have you by my side, feel your breath upon my cheek, and drink in that intoxicating sense of nearness which makes each nerve thrill with a joy so deep it is almost pain! Yet more than ever I believe that it is wiser, far wiser, for us not to meet. *Aufwiedersehen.*

P.S.—The visitor announced by the bell was a cadaverous-looking priest bringing a subscription-book for a female orphan asylum!

XXIX

(Letter missing)

XXX

PARIS, *December 1842.*

MON CHER AMI INSOUCIANT—*Pas* possible to receive your gracious visit to-day, for still another brother has come to join me, and I owe to him at least the first twenty-four hours of his stay in Paris.

Surely it was for you, *mon cher*, that the description given of a friend of mine was originally intended. He is a trifle cynical, this friend, and decidedly pessimistic, and of him it was reported that he never believed in anything until he saw it, and then he was convinced that it was an optical illusion. The accuracy of the description struck me. Have you by chance sent the Etruscan seal to your one friend at Madrid?

XXXI

Sunday Evening.

On Tuesday at two o'clock, if you will, we might try the Musée, that is, if this evil thing called a headache has by that time returned to the lower regions where it rightly belongs. Were it not for this wretched *migraine* I would write you a wild legend of the north in return for your story of the Spanish barber.

XXXII

Thursday, Midnight.

You were *très gentil* to-day, and on my part, believe me, I am *très reconnaissante*. Your fears lest I should take cold were unfounded, and I slept perfectly well, with no tormenting dreams of lonely deserts and an Eastern version of the Venusberg in Tannhäuser, with wastes of sand, a palm tree, and the skeleton of a camel for the *mise en scène*.

After all, how few days in the year, or in a

whole life, does a human being really live! We sleep, wake, go through a certain number of duties or so-called pleasures, eat, read, walk, see those who are around us, and then sleep again, but who in their senses could seriously call that living? Existing if you will, but nothing more. A whole life, and only a few days, at best a few months, of living such as deserves the name, to be gathered out of the long stretch of years. The thought makes me melancholy, so I will say good-night, lest my dreary mood affects you too. On second thoughts I will bid you good morning, for that is the time when this note will reach you, and I would that on opening it you might find a sunshiny *morgengruss*, not gloomy melancholy. The flowers I send are fresh and sweet as I write, and may perhaps keep a tiny perfume for your waking; I bought them at the *marché* of the Madeleine in returning home to-day after our walk.—*Bon jour.* MARIQUITA.

XXXIII

PARIS,

Friday, 10th December.

Do not tempt me. When the 21st of January comes I may, and probably shall, repent in sackcloth and ashes, but on this 10th day of December my mind is firm and unmovable, I cannot, will not, go again to the Musée. The arch tempter is the devil: you can never take second place in anything, therefore if you become a tempter it must be arch tempter, *i.e.* the devil.

My nerves are shaken to their foundation by the most piteous sight I have ever seen. You must have noticed the little Jacques, the merry little black-eyed imp who was always tumbling about the courtyard under everybody's feet. He was the most amusing little scamp I ever met, and the *concierge* and his wife positively adored him; they have no children of their own, and I believe they picked up this waif one cold winter night on the Boulevard where he had been purposely lost. Well, poor

little Jacques strayed beyond the court to-day, and when playing in the street fell under one of the lumbering heavy coal carts, and was carried back a poor wee bit of crushed humanity, the laughing rosy face all white and sharp with pain. But through all his suffering he seemed to have only one thought, how best to cheer the distracted old couple who are the only father and mother the little fellow has ever known. "Do not cry, *petit Papa* ; *Maman, ne pleur pas.*" This the weak little voice said over and over again with pathetic monotonousness, a pale ghost of a smile on the small drawn features. Even when the fever came and he grew delirious, the boy turned restlessly from side to side with always the same words, "*Ne pleure pas maman, bon petit papa, ne pleure pas.*" Poor little child, there was nothing to do for him, and to-night or to-morrow he must die, merry little Jacques.

Forgive me for not coming again as you wish, and do not quarrel or say cutting things to me. Little Jacques and the tragedy of his morsel of life have made me sad, and when I am sad "methinks I love you most."

XXXIV

Tuesday, 14th December.

You have a wonderful patience, *mon ami*, and a persistence which ought to carry you far. Still harping on the Musée. If from now until 20th January you dwell upon this one idea, will it not get upon your nerves, and ought you not to keep those same nerves quite calm for the trying ordeal of those thirty-nine visits to the Academicians which to my feeble intellect appear almost as formidable as the Thirty-nine Articles of the Protestant faith?

You say that I know well how to gild the most bitter pill; what if I confess that I find it better for my own peace of mind not to see you, for the flattering (and true) reason that a terrible fear then comes over me that the time may arrive when I shall never see you more? This is a finer gilding than most pills are coated with. If you could but understand that I am very weak where you only think me a coquette.

I have a handkerchief for you, which took my fancy immensely; I wonder if you will like

it. Tell me how to send it to you, and pray that I may keep my resolution not to see you.

XXXV

(Letter missing)

XXXVI

(Letter missing)

XXXVII

PARIS,

Monday, December 1842.

Why to-night, of all nights, should a far-away memory of my strange lonely childhood come to me with a vivid distinctness? You will smile at the reminiscence, and smile still more at the weighty importance I attached to it when it was a very real and serious experience to me, but I was a queer child, and it is characteristic. I am afraid I was wofully conceited, and it may be that just such experiences were needed in order to suppress my undue

opinion of myself. One cold winter morning I awoke positively bristling with good resolutions. I had been devouring a good many books too highly seasoned with religious views for a small person of my morbid tendencies ; I was in a highly-strung state of self-sacrifice, believing with fanatical fierceness that even I could work out my own salvation by prayer and good works, and a strict mortifying of fleshly lusts. I was, in a word, in a frightfully pharisaical frame of mind, believing secretly that I did all these things already, if not quite perfectly, still infinitely better than the children around me, or even some of the grown-up people ; believing also that I was on special terms of privileged intimacy with the Almighty, that I understood Him, and He me, a good deal better than most people. Jesus was my friend, the smallest act in my daily life I did for Him, and to please Him. I had been peculiarly lucky for some time past, had won approbation for my quickness at my lessons, and been praised with unusual generosity for various things. My little heart swelled with the true pharisaical

complacency, and I felt the delightfully soothing consciousness that I was "not as other men are," only I said children not men. For some days this exalted state of mind had worked very well, and each night I said longer and longer prayers, positively revelling in the state of holiness to which I had attained, wrestling with God as I imagined Jacob wrestled with the angel, only all my entreaties were for others, for my playmates, my companions at school, my naughty little brothers, that they might finally be brought to know the beauty of holiness, might reach the state of boundless satisfaction and divine peace which I by special grace had already reached.

On the particular winter morning referred to, this glow of godliness was very strong in me, I yearned like the saints of old to be up and doing, to buckle my armour on and to fight the battles of the Lord. Failing actual visible warfare against Satan, I meant to scourge myself, and to chastise the carnal lusts with greater severity than ever. First dressing without a fire, that I might mortify the flesh, blue and shivering

I went down and inspected the ready laid breakfast-table. I remembered that an ugly crack disfigured my youngest brother's favourite china mug from which he drank his morning draught of milk. The child himself had not noticed the blemish across the large gilt letters, spelling—"Love the Giver," which was the pride of his baby heart, but I had, and at the time it appeared, congratulated myself that it was in his mug not mine. In the flush of righteousness which filled my heart to bursting, I determined to exchange the cups and give my little brother the whole one. At this very moment he came to the table, and I hastened to make the exchange, before he could see it, for did not the Bible say "Let not your left hand know what the right hand doeth," and had not the full meaning of that sentence been made clear to me? But, alas, neither right nor left hand could be depended on that fateful day. So frozen were my fingers after the fireless room, that I clumsily let the mug fall, and my brother howled with grief for his hopelessly broken treasure. I was sharply scolded, but bore it meekly for "Jesus'

sake," as I kept repeating to my sore little heart, which knew so well my real motive and my innocence. The baby brother refused to kiss me, striking at me in unforgiving anger for destroying the thing he loved the best, and heavy-hearted I went to my lessons, promptly receiving a mark for being late, won because I had stopped to make peace with the child I had unintentionally wronged. Several little friends studied with me, and the class in history held one girl so nearly my equal in her love for books that we were called the rivals, but for some time past she had occupied the first place. A question came that day at which she hesitated: if she could not reply to it her place would be mine. It was a terrible moment. I knew the required answer, the coveted honour was within my grasp, but the Bible told me to prefer others before myself, and this girl was my friend. She only needed a hint, one word, and I knew she would remember all that was necessary. Speaking while reciting lessons was strictly forbidden by our governess, but I took out my pocket handkerchief, coughed, and

quickly whispered the word which I knew would save my companion. She took advantage of my hint, and remained head of the class ; but for me a speedy judgment followed. When accused of having spoken, I dared not lie, so received two more bad marks to add to the one for unpunctuality ; but worse, far worse than this was the blow dealt me by the friend I had rescued at the cost of my own advancement. She unhesitatingly denied having heard what I had said. This literally staggered me for a moment, and bitterly did I reproach her when later we spoke together, but she was scornful in her denials, and I knew when we parted that our friendship, which had been bound by solemn oaths to endure through eternity, was destroyed. During that entire day the same evil chance followed me. On every side I was misunderstood or reprimanded for things I had not done, until I grew fearful and bewildered. All my self-satisfaction seemed to shrivel up ; the confident reliance I had had upon God melted away, the warm glow which had enveloped me and made me feel so strong had grown chill

and feeble, and a sullen despair seemed creeping over me with a resentful sense of injustice. As the early winter evening came on I wandered about the house disconsolately, too proud to confess the soreness of my wounded feelings, too miserable to stay in the warm cheerful nursery where the little brothers were playing. We children had been left to the care of servants, and in the great lonely house the nursery was the one bright spot. Finally, I went to the library where the shutters of the windows were not yet closed, and curled myself up among the cushions in one of the low wide seats. I can see the little crumpled figure now, with the sore child's heart almost bursting, and the rebellious tears which came hot and fast, dashed away by angry little hands. The room grew darker and the things in it turned to mere shadowy outlines, but the small form in the window-seat sat on looking hopelessly at the frosty stars which blinked and twinkled mockingly.

"Nobody loves me, nobody cares. It's no use trying. I don't believe there is a God, or

He would not let people not understand. Why do people hurt me so when I want to be good?"

Poor little angry, doubting, lonely child. I feel sorry for her as I sit here to-night, writing to you; are you sorry for her, or do you not understand?

The hot tears came faster still, and the child let them fall. Presently a cold nose rubbed itself against her hand, and a yellow greyhound jumped up beside her. Passionately she threw her arms around the dog drawing him tightly to her.

"O Zippy, Zippy, love me! Love me back! Don't run away, I love you Zip, love me back, love me back!"

Please be sorry for the little child.

I think I never have loved you as I loved you yesterday.

XXXVIII

PARIS,

New Year's Day 1843.

The very first words that I write in this glad New year of grace must be for you ; but have you welcome large enough for all the love they bring, the wishes that every good on earth may come to you, the prayer that sorrow and pain may never be your portion, the trust that future years may gather only blessings, joy, delight for you, till life shall close, and gentle death shall bring you peace ?

For the letters you send my brother I cannot thank you in writing when I know you to be so near, therefore meet me as usual, and you will find me appreciative of this latest kindness added to so many earlier ones.

They tell me that once an Academician, a man becomes something between a rock and a mummy ; is this true, and shall you turn into this sensitive thing ? Are the following German characters correct ? *Ich liebe dich.*

XXXIX

Wednesday.

Your account of Rachel amused me very much, one can hardly blame her for being annoyed at the absurd interruptions during her recitation. Yes, certainly I will come for the walk. At two o'clock to-morrow, Thursday. Do pray for fine weather, this sort of thing may be good for fishes, but I hardly swim well enough to enjoy it.—*À demain.*

XL

Friday Evening, 15th January 1843.

You seemed so anxious lest I should suffer from our drenching that I send a line to assure you that I am all right. My cheeks burned so when I came in that my cousin Madame G—— asked if I had fever; I did not tell her the varied excitements we had gone through in order to find a shelter from the tempest, enough I think to account for a dozen fevers! What a rain that was, worse a thousand times than

that of a fortnight ago, when I declined to play the part of fish. Why were you sad yesterday? The question has sorely puzzled me since we parted. *Au revoir, au revoir!*

XLI

Saturday.

So tired! Oh so tired am I, that were it not for my promise I would not write; instead I should like to sleep, but happiness I think makes me wakeful. Could I but be sure of such dreams as our meeting of yesterday I would sleep in spite of happiness, knowing that they would bring so deep a joy that in them I could lull my soul to sweet forgetfulness till we could meet again.

XLII

1.30—*Wednesday,*
January 1843.

The weather is so uncertain that I have decided not to walk, and send this before two

o'clock that you may not wait for me. Were you quite just yesterday, or kind? I think you were neither. And because I may or may not do this or that one day and not another, you should not claim the one or the other as a precedent. Unless you promise to remember my conditions, and to keep your own promises, our walks must be discontinued. You would not believe that I seriously meant this when I said it the other day, almost a week ago, but do you not believe it now? You call the walks a pleasure; you tell me they are the greatest happiness you know; yet deliberately you prevent them from being enjoyed, and this by your own perverseness. Is this reasonable?

XLIII

(Letter missing)

XLIV

(Letter missing)

XLV

26th January 1843.

A truce, a truce, a truce ! Life is not worth the living at such a price as this. I cry *mea culpa*, so have done ; let this unseemly strife between us end, and let us be at peace. So weary am I, so tired, I think I would purchase peace at any price, if death itself must prove the penalty. Come, I have drugged my conscience. We'll look at it together. It lies so still—so still—what is *so* still as a conscience drugged ? I seem unable to find a simile strong enough ; out of your cleverness, your mocking, cutting rhetoric of speech, your wit, your irony, your cruel, cold sharp cynicism, choose me a fitting phrase to say how still, how stilly quiet a thing a drugged conscience is. I am very weak in words, actions are my forte, and actions they say speak louder than words ! So still, so still, so deadly still ! My God ! I know how still it lies, I have found the simile. The gaunt ghastly skeleton rotting on the sand !!! There it is ; the simile, not the skele-

ton, I write so fast I may not make the words distinct. But you must see it ; even in a dream it was cut so sharp against God's heaven of blue. It never moved so much as a hair's breadth ; the white ghostly thing with the stars looking at it pityingly in the soft south wind. Even the breeze did not move it ; and the sun, burning with a furnace heat, never stirred it, only bleached it drier and drier. Heavens, it was dry enough I trow when I saw it, perhaps now it is whitened dust, blown to the four corners of the earth. Then it could no longer be my simile, for it would move, and movement for a conscience drugged is a foolish contradiction in terms. Well now love me—love me back ! love me back ! I feel like that little crumpled figure that once sat in the window-seat in the dusky gloaming all alone. The poor little angry, doubting, lonely child, whom I told you I was sorry for. She had fought her little fight with such a confident, conceited, pharisaical little ignorant heart, and when the end came it was "Love me, love ! Love me back. I love you." And the little yellow greyhound,

poor faithful affectionate dead and buried little Zippy dog, settled warmly down beside her in the chilly dark and licked the angry childish hands which had dashed the tears away, and loved her back again. "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" The term dog does not seem to be used in quite a flattering sense in this somewhat sarcastic biblical question, but for myself I rather query if the fidelity of a dog has ever been equalled by a man. What think you? Ask pardon, then love me back, love me back! Love is the only real sunshine, and without sunshine I cannot live. I have a sharp pain in my side, the left; is that where conscience is, or only one's heart?

XLVI

PARIS, *2d February.*

Could we not find some new place for our walks? There are too many people one knows in Paris now to make it either safe or amusing to risk meeting them.

XLVII

(Letter missing)

XLVIII

PARIS,

Sunday Morning, 11th February.

Wer besser liebt? Should you ever ask me that question again most unhesitatingly could I give the answer——I love best. But you will not think so when I add that I shall not be able to see you to-day, I am feeling anything but well, and several annoying things prevent all hope of my being able to enjoy our walk. Further, I cannot name any day or hour just at present when I can promise to come. We must trust to circumstances growing favourable. With a most unsmiling face do I write all this, for I am disappointed, *mais—— que voulez-vous?* All the world seems going to church; from my window, as I write, I see men, women, and children coming and going up the wide steps of the Madeleine in an endless ceaseless stream.

There is a place (I will not tell you where, and you are never likely to come across it), but there is one lovely corner of the world, where, could I go to-day, I should feel the better for it. A quiet spot, where prayer is real and faith is not a dream. Imagine a wide, blue lake, stretched out in shimmering beauty; from its shores rise gently-sloping hills, grass-covered, or thick with foliage in every shade of green, where deep cool shadows lie in dark streaks so restful amidst the flooding sunshine. Far off is one white-capped mountain peak, kissed every morning by the earliest sunbeam and the first pink flush of dawn, and every evening greeted by the latest crimson glow of the purple god as he slowly sinks to rest. Fair islands dot the lake, fairest of all the one I take you to on a quiet summer Sunday. Through a wood, along a narrow winding path with high trees on either side must you go, until a pile of stones surmounted by a cross arrests your eye. The path leads on, and a stillness seems to have fallen on you as you walk, perhaps from the shadow of the cross. Soon, quite straight before

you is a wooded grove of white birch trees, tall slim poplars, and young leafy oaks. A space is here, around it rustic seats, and fronting you as you stand, a rocky altar twined with flowers, above this a tall white cross with arms outstretched. Overhead only the deep blue vault of heaven, around the tranquil water of the lake. The place is empty, but slowly one by one the rustic seats fill quietly; those who fill them seeming to be hushed by the same curious stillness which has fallen on you since passing the wayside cross. There is something holy in the silence, and the whisper of the breeze which just stirs the leaves in passing making them glint and flash in the sunlight, seems to fill you with a strangely penetrating sense of calm.

Suddenly, in the distance, comes a faint far sound of voices singing, at first almost unheard, but each moment growing clearer, louder, in the hymn of praise; and presently a strain of music swells the sound, while white-robed choristers wend along the curving path, their fresh young voices mounting up towards heaven, higher and higher, until, as the surpliced band reaches the

space before the altar the sound has grown to thrilling gladness. Those quiet ones who fill the rustic seats have joined their voices to the song, and joyous echoes fill the shadowy wood, floating far across the shining lake. Ah, this is praise indeed in its purest, simplest form. The stillness falls again, one single earnest voice pleading to God above for mercy and forgiveness of sins to erring mortals, being the only one that breaks upon the air. High above the kneeling forms stands the tall white cross, not only as the emblem of that other shameful tree upon which hung the God Man, but with a loving, yearning tenderness all its own. Strangely enough it bends slightly forward, not sufficiently to affright you, lest weighted with all the agony and woe of those for whose sins it once bore the sacrifice, it should fall upon and crush you, but tenderly, wooingly, as though to draw you nearer and enfold you in the stretched-out arms, "mighty to save." Hot waves of feeling sweep over you, strange unbidden tears come to your eyes, the world and scheming noisy life seem immeasurably far off

from you in this island chapel by the lake with only God's high, free heaven for a dome. Thoughts which have not been yours for years come crowding quickly, speaking with small still voices. Those you have loved and lost, and perforce have learned to live without, feel nearer to you in that lovely, lonely spot than they ever can in a busy world ; some spell draws you close to them with all the old, warm love of long ago. The prayers are over, the glad praise mounts once more to Heaven, and then, as the choristers wind slowly through the wood again, the sound of singing voices grows fainter and fainter, dying away at last in a distant, deep Amen. The hushed sense of silence comes anew, all is so still.

I saw it once long years ago, the strangely peaceful, lake-side chapel in the wood ; I wish I could show it to you to-day.

But it is not here, not in brilliant Paris ; there is no room for it, no soil on which to plant so plain a cross, and in all the wide, broad streets of Paris not space enough for that narrow curving path leading to the altar, and where

the Amen dies away. It is not here, but the old life is, the wicked, old humbugging life of the wicked, old humbugging world, with its iron force of habit, its pleasant, mocking smiles, its thousand cursed doubts and wonderings, its cool, intellectual reasonings, its saturnine humour, its red-blooded passions. *Vive l'amour* is the song sung best in Paris—Love is the god we worship, you and I, the dear god who claims our adoration. And 'tis not a bad worship after all, not for us, for you and for me—in Paris.

It looks like snow. I am wise, I think, to decide against our walk for to-day, but unless I send this letter quickly, it will hardly reach you before the hour when we should have met. I kiss you in my heart, *au revoir*.

XLIX

Sunday Evening, 11th February.

Dear heart, do not cavil at my every word, almost my every thought. I was really ill

this morning, and therefore could not walk ; really occupied with necessary things (all concerning other people), therefore could not meet you, much as I wished to do so. Yesterday afternoon I too found the weather superb, yet where do you suppose I spent the glorious sunshiny hours ? In the Petit St. Thomas, that fearful shop, crushed, crowded, almost suffocated ; tormented to buy on the right side and on the left, elbowed by fat women who had breakfasted on onions, *mes pauvres pieds écrasés* by fatter men come to buy cotton night-caps. Altogether it was a pleasant way to spend a perfect afternoon, far pleasanter than merely walking with you in the park at Versailles or under the great trees at St. Germain ! My cousin is going away on Thursday, and wanted me to help her with her shopping. Could I say " No, I would rather not, thank you kindly ; I have promised to spend just that time with the cleverest, wittiest man in France, he is far more amusing than you " ? Be reasonable, at least outwardly. It is the little outward reason that leaves us a few loopholes in this mad

world of ours for bits of delicious stolen happiness.

What have you for me that I shall think stupid? You must have gone a long way to find that, a stupid thing, when your hands give it.

That very last walk must not be repeated—in detail, *comprenez-vous? en gros, mais pas en détail*. Please remember this.

L

(Letter missing)

LI

16th February.

Oh the lovely pins, how charming of you! The blue shawl I find a trifle gay, but have a brilliant idea as to how it had best be used. I will explain it to you when we meet. My cousin is waiting in the carriage for me; I have not a moment. Oh for a little sunshine, what has happened to the weather? The very first fine day I promise to try my best, for see you

soon—I must. I was furious with you the other night at the opera, but to-day I forgive you, *et je vous aime*. Love me back, love me back.

LII

(Letter missing)

LIII

Thursday, February 1843.

Is the Mr. Sharpe whose illness I have just heard of your friend? I once met him in London. Poor man. What a monstrous, threadbare sort of a week I have passed! Shops, shops, shops, until every idea in my head seems turned into lace or ribbon. On Friday or Saturday I hope to be free. Do take care of your poor eye. I am sincerely distressed about it.

LIV

(Letter missing)

LV

(Letter missing)

LVI

27th February 1843.

What can I say to you to help your sad thoughts? You know that you have all my sympathy. Go at once to London if you think you ought to do so, or if it would give you pleasure, or give pleasure to your sick friend. You may later regret not having done so. I will write to you while you are gone, should you decide to go, then, after that, I think I will write no more, I dare not, I find more courage comes to me in speaking.

LVII

Thursday Morning, 1st March 1843.

Saturday, at the same time and place, weather permitting!

LVIII

(Letter missing)

LVIX

(Letter missing)

LX

PARIS, *Friday*.

If you love the sunshine I adore it! I sympathise with the religion which makes the sun its god, so great is my devotion for it. I know that I am better physically and morally when it shines upon me; it improves my temper and puts me at peace with mankind. But that you love me better in sunshine than at other times suggests other ideas not so clear to my mind as my own are upon the incalculable value of the sun. No, I do not quite approve of this; it does not appeal to me with the entire appreciation which most of your ideas excite. I have just read the final sentence of your note again, and more carefully, and find that I was a trifle hasty in my rendering of it. You distinctly say after all, that you love me "*dans tous les temps*," but that the happiness of seeing

me is greater happiness when the sun illuminates it. Now the subtilty of this distinction appeals to me delightfully, for does it not prove that sunshine affects you as it does me, giving you more pleasure in all life, even in love? *A la bonne heure*, I like you to think like me, and I try to think with you.

What an inanely stupid letter! A bread-and-butter miss of sixteen would blush to send it! But I feel idiotic, rather drunk with sunshine, I have so long been starved without it. Light your cigarette with my silly silly letter, *mon beau soleil*, it is the wisest use you can make of it, if even in that very distant form the word wise can be written near it. Oh *Sonnenschein*! Oh *Sonnenschein*! *À mardi*.

P.S.—I forgot to say that I am going to the country.

LXI

Saturday, 19th March 1843.

There are letters and letters, as I suppose there are varying distinctions between fools as

a class and philosophers as a class. Having sent you my last epistle in the guise of the most infantile of weak little black and white fools, I will try to-day to despatch my thoughts by an old philosopher gray and hoary with wisdom. Wisdom shall look from his eyes and his wrinkled forehead, in his bushy brows and snowy locks, and shall run down his venerable beard as the oil ran down Aaron's in the Bible story. By the way, when in England did you ever hear that story sung as a sacred anthem? I have, once, but I am not particularly keen about doing so again. The oil ran down his beard, ran down—Aaron—the oil—it ran—his beard ran down—down—down—Aaron—down—the oil, the oil, the oil, down Aaron—down—down—the oil his beard ran down—ran——God knows where it finally did or did not run or whether it was the oil, or Aaron, or the beard which eventually ran down—down—down—. The only comprehensive impression left upon my mind when the anthem was over was that the beard and Aaron and the oil were going on in such an extraordinary and improper

manner and getting so mixed, that I felt decidedly shy about having anything to do with any of them.

I have written to a friend of mine in London for the rare and valuable book you so much wished for : if any one can procure it he will be able to do so ; his own library is one of the best in the country, and he has exceptional chances for picking up literary gems. If he is in town he will answer at once, and will also begin his search for the book without loss of time, but it may be that he is abroad—he frequently goes away at this season. However, my letter is gone, is already posted, and just so soon as I receive his answer I will send it to you. Let us hope that it may be favourable in every way. You need not be uneasy lest my asking for the book may cause astonishment. My book-worm friend is accustomed to my eccentricities, and will not give the request a second thought—not in the way you fear. As for the price, if you propose paying such a sum as that I can only say, “ Rather you than me ! ” “ Me ” would very strongly object, although as

a rule I consider money spent in books as well invested.

Why oh why are you so sad? In almost every letter you tell me that you are *triste*; do you think it makes me gay to hear it? What can I do for you, what say to you, in what words write to you, in order to cure you of this mortal melancholy? I try each mood in turn, grave and gay, silly and serious; I rack my brain for stories to make you laugh, for something to bring a smile to your grave lips, because always in my ear are ringing the words you write so often—*triste, très triste, bien triste*. How can I cheer your sadness? Only tell me, and you shall be *triste* no more. Will it please you to hear that for Monday, the whole of Monday, a long long happy Monday, I can be yours? I shall be free for the entire day, and will use my freedom in making myself your captive, "An it please you, my lord." Does it please you, will you order sunshine, and a gentle western breeze, and a happiness which nothing can disturb, and a great great love for me, and a cheerful salon and cosy little *déjeuner à la*

fourchette at the Pavillon Henri Quatre, near the great trees at St. Germain where Louise de la Vallière loved the king, and where the magnificent Louis XIV loved Louise? Will you order all this and have it ready for Monday, blessed Monday the 21st day of March in the year of grace 1843?

Now have I not kept my promise and sent you a letter freighted with wisdom, for do I not know that the wisdom you like best in me, and find the wisest, is the folly of love? Ah yes, I know, and I love you for your wise folly, as you love me in return for my foolish wisdom.

LXII

Monday Evening, 21st March 1843.

Once upon a time there was a little girl called Mary who had a friend named Grace. The friend was older than Mary, and in the child's affection for her was mingled a little fear and not a little humbleness. One day Mary's mother said to her, "If you are very

good for a whole week, study your lessons well, and are careful with your copy, and neither make a noise nor ask tiresome questions, you shall go and spend Saturday with Aunt Marion at Clover Patch, if the weather is quite fair, and take Gracie with you."

This announcement to the child meant just bliss, absolute bliss, nothing more and nothing less. Aunt Marion was the dearest, kindest old maid aunt in the world ; Clover Patch was the dearest old house in existence, and had the most beautiful gardens and clover fields, filled with fruit and flowers. Oh how weary long the week seemed to little Mary. She studied her lessons until her little brain was dizzy, and wrote out her copy over and over again, very careful to make big round letters, but afraid to ask what the words meant because mother might call it a tiresome question.

NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN.

It looked very much like a lie, and Mary hardly liked to write it over so often. Her doll was new, with its pretty pink cheeks and round little body, so new that Mary was afraid

to take it to Clover Patch with her, much as she wanted to show it to Aunt Marion. You see the paint had not rubbed off yet, and no holes had been stuck in the body, so Mary could not know that it was stuffed with sawdust. Several things she could think of were new, but she would not run any risk, so held her peace. Every night she prayed with a beautiful faith that it might be "quite fair weather" on Saturday, and she was painfully quiet that no sound of hers might imperil the success of the trip to Clover Patch. The day came, warm and bright ; Grace was sweet and gracious ; Aunt Marion her dear old self ; fruit, flowers, fresh country milk, everything was delicious. The children played in the new-mown hay, gathered buttercups, and shouted with delight when the little round gold spot was reflected in their dimpled chins, tossed cowslip balls and twined daisy chains, fed the downy yellow chickens, and gazed entranced at the new litter of pigs, the funny round pinky white and black things with sweet little curled-up tails. A very long, long happy day at Clover

Patch was bliss indeed. But the children grew tired at last, and a little cross, and almost before they knew it an awful ending had come to their happiness. Clouds were coming up quickly, and Mary grew frightened—she was terribly afraid of a thunderstorm. Grace was not at all sympathetic, but a good deal superior to her younger friend, and she only laughed at little Mary's troubled face. "Oh, Gracie, let us go into the house quickly, it is getting so dark."

"I did not know you were a coward."

"Oh, I'm not a coward, but look, quick, oh, there's the thunder."

"Well, if you're not a coward, stay here."

"But oh, Gracie—the lightning, please come in."

"Now you are going to cry. I wouldn't be a coward and a cry-baby both."

The words were bad enough, they made Mary's little heart swell with indignation, but the laugh—the heartless mocking laugh so hard and scornful with the cruel scorn of childhood—was more than little Mary's heart could bear.

She clenched her fist tight with sudden passion, her small face was very white.

"And now you are a little spitfire," Grace said suddenly, before her companion had time to speak.

"And you—you are a liar, and liars go to hell, and the devil burns them!"

The words almost choked her, but she had said them, those awful words which made her tremble when mother told her about them on Sunday nights. And said them to Grace, her friend that she loved. Oh what an ending to the blissful summer day!

Do you believe in a soul? Is it an embryo, a spiritual essence, a germ? Shall everything that we have now, all that we are, all the fears and loves and hatreds that we feel in the flesh, fall away and leave us only a seed, and shall one seed know another seed for the old love it loved on earth when both are changed and glorified? Or does it go and dwell in a star, this spirit which they say wings its flight above and is not buried in the ground with the poor body it has lived with always but which it

leaves behind to worms? And do the stars recognise each other?

Some wise ones tell us we shall meet again and be the same ; same hands, same feet, a mouth to eat and kiss, "raised incorruptible"—that is the phrase. In which do you believe? Tell me.

My heart and I are very tired to-night, we have puzzled so long over old things and new. But there is nothing new, nothing absolutely new can be, because the days of miracles are over, and although the world still has its full complement of fools, they are nineteenth century fools who do not believe in miracles. It is, however, given to some silvery tongues to tell old truths so cunningly, and to turn their old dyed garments so cleverly, that even the fools are taken in. It strikes me that we grow a little too analytical and metaphysical to be quite amusing. Good-night.

LXIII

Saturday, 10 A.M., 30th March.

It must be for Monday from two to five, to-day I cannot possibly leave.

LXIV

Friday Morning, 8th April.

Only a short time since I wrote to you that the time of miracles was past, and lo, one has happened ! Is that a proper term to apply to a miracle ? I am unaccustomed to such things. Do they happen, or take place, or merely exist ? they are certainly puzzling. On Monday, for to-morrow I cannot come, I will explain the miracle, and you shall tell me how to understand it. Now do remember this ; so often when we meet we quite forget, at least I do, the things I mean to tell you, for instance, you never said whether you liked my little essay on *Wilhelm Meister*, and I wrote it more for your opinion than for anything else. Do not spoil the coming Monday as you did the last, it really is too stupid for us to quarrel as we do, even the "making up" does not really make up for what we each time lose and suffer. When I am gone you will regret it all, and I probably shall regret it still more. Let us be more sensible.

LXV

PARIS, *Tuesday, 12th April.*

Ah, that was a happy day, with no drawback, if only your poor eyes did not suffer from that wretched *courant d'air*. I scarcely dare write lest some word or phrase of mine may spoil the "afterglow," which I know cannot last long, but which I would hold undisturbed in its perfect beauty until the last tint steals away; even then it will always have a dear corner in my memory, a place to itself in my gallery of mind pictures, a little quiet place where the brilliancy of the other paintings will not clash or be too strong for the soft tones and dreamy tenderness of this.

At dinner last night some one spoke of Catullus and his works, but I did not own to having read them. A discussion arose as to the precise date at which women's influence in the world began, and the various opinions amused me. Tell me yours.

LXVI

PARIS, 2d May.

I wore the ivy in my hair to-night when I dined with the Comtesse de B——, going afterwards to see the *feu d'artifice*. It suddenly struck me in the middle of dinner that they might compare me to a ruin in consequence of my decorations, and I was quite uncomfortable ; it would be exactly like M. N——, who was present, to do this. Here is a little comparison for you, a little conundrum for you to find an answer to by the time we meet, or if you are very industrious you may discover it before that and write me the answer.

LXVII

(Letter missing)

LXVIII

PARIS, 13th June 1843.

I think I cannot bear it much longer, this incessant quarrelling when we meet, and your

unkindness during the short time that you are with me. Why not let it all end? it would be better for both of us. I do not love you less when I write these words; if you could know the sadness which they echo in my heart you would believe this. No, I think I love you more, but I cannot understand you. As you have often said, our natures must be very different, entirely different; if so, what is this curious bond between them? To me you seem possessed with some strange restlessness and morbid melancholy which utterly spoils your life, and in return you never see me without overwhelming me with reproaches, if not for one thing, for another. I tell you I cannot, will not, bear it longer. If you love me, then in God's name cease tormenting me as well as yourself with these wretched doubts and questionings and complaints. I have been ill, seriously ill, and there is nothing to account for my illness save the misery of this apparently hopeless state of things existing between us. You have made me weep bitter tears of alternate self-reproach and indignation, and finally of

complete miserable bewilderment as to this unhappy condition of affairs. Believe me, tears like these are not good to mingle with love, they are too bitter, too scorching, they blister love's wings and fall too heavily on love's heart. I feel worn out with a dreary sort of hopelessness ; if you know a cure for pain like this send it to me quickly.

LXIX

PARIS, *Saturday*, 6 P.M., 23d *June*.

One line before I have to dress for a large dinner at Madame de G——'s. Although I said good-bye to you less than an hour ago, I cannot refrain from writing to tell you that a happy calm which seems to penetrate my whole being seems also to have wiped out all remembrance of the misery and unhappiness which has overwhelmed me lately. Why cannot it always be so, or would life perhaps be then too blessed, too wholly happy for it to be life? I know that you are free to-night, will you not write to me, that the first words my eyes fall upon

to-morrow shall prove that to-day has not been a dream? Yes, write to me. I have not taken cold.

LXX

8th July.

Let me dream—Let me dream.

.

LXXI

PARIS, 25th July.

When I remember how short the time now is before you must leave and all our happy days be over, I can scarce write for the grief that comes over me. In losing you I shall lose my other better self, and must wander on as aimlessly as those tortured ones in Dante's hell, who have lost their mates and can know peace never again. Will you think of me when you have gone, think kindly and never bitterly? If I have hurt you I have hurt myself far more, so let that make amends.

I must soon decide where my summer is to be spent; all my plans have been in abeyance

lately, it was so fair to dream and idly drift from day to day without any fixed plan or purpose. But all dreaming must, I suppose, one day end. And the end should be good, peaceful, and *convenable*. Before all things, no regrets, or reproaches, or vain looking back ; no futile wishing that things had been other than they were and are. So to part were well, perhaps better than to dream on indefinitely. When a break comes naturally and calmly, a journey, a friendly parting, is it not wiser to accept quietly this solution, to go our several ways in life in peaceable commonplace fashion, rather than to wait for an end which may be tragic, or worse still, a wretched, played-out comedy ? Think of this, my friend, and tell me the result of your thoughts.

LXXII

Thursday, 28th July.

Your letter received last evening was no answer to mine of the 25th. Will you not write ? I wished to speak to you on Monday, but could not.

LXXIII

PARIS,

Thursday Evening, 2d August 1843.

It was an odd interview ; I am not quite sure to-night whether I am myself, or some one else, you will probably suggest that I am neither, only a statue made of a material a trifle colder than marble. In truth, you would not be far wrong this time, for I feel frozen ; not externally, I took no cold and hope you did not, but all my ideas seem congealed. You are writing to me, I know, perhaps at this very moment. What will you say, I wonder, how will you speak of our curious interview? I think I know what one part of your letter will be, one idea that in some form or other you will suggest. It is this, that we put away the past, and begin anew. You will express it more poetically, in choicer language, but that will be the sense underlying your words, at least I think so. I shall be very curious to see if I have judged rightly.

LXXIV

4th August 1843.

Yes, it was a good "recommencement," whether absolutely wise or not is another question which we had better not discuss. But I was very happy, happy for one long golden afternoon, and that at least is something, no small thing either to save and hold and keep as fact and memory. Adieu, *et au revoir*.

LXXV

PARIS, 6th August.

I cannot let you go without one line, although it may be the last I write, for your words wounded me too cruelly yesterday easily to forget them. They cannot, however, prevent my wishing you *bon voyage*.

LXXVI

(Letter missing)

LXXVII

VERSAILLES,
11th August 1843.

The whole morning has been spent by me under our favourite trees trying by force of reading German to make the long hours pass more quickly. They are *very* long these hours passed without you. The weather is lovely, that at least is one satisfactory bit in the generally muddled state of my affairs. I can walk all day if I like, and be troubled neither by undue heat nor rain. Very few people are here; the two pretty children of Lady C—— have been left in charge of their nurse while her ladyship disports herself and her toilettes at Trouville; old M. de L—— still pursues his researches in the gallery for his *Notes on Painting* (what an awful book it will be when finished!); and an American family, who afford me much amusement, are about the only humans I see. This Transatlantic party are delicious, each one perfect in his or her particular way. They have actually crossed that terrible Atlantic

Ocean, and made a journey that would stagger most people, for the purpose of educating and marrying their daughter in foreign lands. I must begin my description with the daughter—she is so much the most important member. She is lovely—a charming figure, complexion like smooth young rose leaves, wavy brown hair, good eyes, and teeth quite perfect. But her voice, *Mon Dieu!* her voice! Do they never teach their children to modulate their voices in that country? It is something quite too awful. This girl comes into the *salle à manger* dressed delightfully, a trifle much, and with diamonds in her ears that in England would be worn at a Court ball; but she is so pretty that she almost produces the effect of a picture, so the dressing, even in its inappropriateness, would not matter so much if only she would remain a picture and not open her lips. But that shrill, unmusical voice, high over every other sound in the room, is quite terrible. No matter who is talking, even the rest of her own party, she still screams on like a pretty young peacock until one's ears tingle. The plump

mamma, wearing more diamonds, does not seem to mind this in the least, or in fact anything else which her daughter does or does not do. She is quite placid under all circumstances, and plainly shows that she is a generation behind the girl in education and culture. The papa is going to encounter the Atlantic again, and be absent from his family for months, that he may make more dollars for his family to spend, and be able to send supplies for the trousseau of Mademoiselle, for the pretty daughter is engaged, the *fiancé* being no less a personage than little Prince P——, that small *attaché* of the Sardinian Legation in London whom I always thought the most forlorn, moth-eaten human specimen I ever met. He is *criblé de dettes*, and they say scrofulous, but his *couronne fermée*, like charity, covers a multitude of sins. They gladly pay his debts, these good democratic Americans, with their hardly-earned dollars, and still more gladly bestow upon him their sweet young daughter, blooming with health and beauty. The sight of it all is rather disgusting; one is apt to hope better things

from a new country claiming to be free from old-world follies.

The owl's feather came safely, but was not needed for the purpose you mention. Even without it under my pillow as a dream talisman, my sleeping as well as waking thoughts are seldom given to any one but yourself. Hardly a safe employment for them, I know, and each day I tell myself that the time has come to seek something else as mental food, while evening returns only to find the old thoughts occupied as usual. Adieu! I await your letters with impatience.

LXXVIII

(Letter missing)

LXXIX

September 1843.

Ah, why did we meet again! Why disturb a memory grown calm and peaceful by an actuality gloomy, stormy, mutually reproachful! What is this strange, tormenting, mysterious

affinity which seems to bind us together when reason, simple common sense even, so plainly says that there is something so radically different in our natures that union of spirit is a simple impossibility? This sort of thing, this meeting and fruitless regretting, is silly childishness, it has not even the dignity of madness to excuse it. Come, in common sense, let us end the whole matter. You are leaving Paris almost immediately; good, then do not let us meet again! I will wish you *bon voyage* as a friend. We will write to each other sometimes, forget each other gradually, and all is said. This is the only sensible thing we can do; let us be sensible, and let this be the end.

LXXX

PARIS, *September.*

I am glad that you did not accept my letter and its suggestions as final, I am glad that we did meet before you left, and that we were sensible enough to part friends—the best and dearest of friends. After all that we have been

to each other, any other course than this would, I think, hardly have proved us to possess much spirit, to say nothing of plain common sense.

To-morrow I leave Paris and go to Hannover for a time to revisit my old haunts, but how long I shall remain I do not yet know. I send this to Avignon, and shall hope for a long letter from there. Send me some architectural sketches ; you must remember our discussion about them.

LXXXI

HANNOVER,
29th September 1843.

Me voici once more in the old familiar German town where long ago I struggled with the terrible German language. I never told you, I think, of my first winter here, but it was amusing enough, or rather it is amusing to look back upon ; at the time there were decided drawbacks to merriment. My guardian was not sorry when I petitioned to be sent to Germany in order to learn the language on the

spot (for well I knew that any attempt on my part to learn it elsewhere would be a conspicuous failure!), and he promptly packed me off under charge of some old ladies travelling in this direction. I was deposited like a parcel—"this side up with care," and "fragile," marked in the corners. My new abode was the sunny little room looking out upon the Georg Strasse, where, for the sake of old associations, I am to-day writing to you. Remember at that time I was innocent of the smallest knowledge of the language which more than once lately I have employed to tell you of the state of my affections. *Ich liebe dich* meant nothing to me then; I could not have said it or written it had the refusal to do so been extermination. Frau Finanzräthin Muthmann was the unpronounceable title I was told to give the fat, shapeless woman who was lady of the house, and who, to add to her slender widow's income, consented to take young women like myself anxious to learn the language of the Fatherland. Glibly enough can I say her name now, but then it was not so easy. There were two

daughters—a pretty blue-eyed Fraulein Marie, about twenty, and a child with long fair braids of wonderful hair in a marvellous state of tidiness, and one son, a lout called Heinrich. The name has always been odious to me since, for its owner fell in love with me, and my first experience of German beer and German *Schwärmerei* combined did not capture my fancy. He was always drinking beer, that odious Heinrich, even when indulging in the wildest metaphors to express his passion for myself. Had I engaged an apartment in the Tower of Babel during its building I should have been equally enlightened in regard to what was going on around me as I was for the first week or so in this little German household to which I must not forget to add one other pupil, but one who was so far advanced in German that she scorned any other tongue; and a cousin of Fraulein Marie—a tall Prussian officer who I am convinced kept his ramrod down his back when it was not needed for active service. Never shall I forget how I disgraced myself the first time this gallant soldier appeared upon

the scene. I had never seen the military social salute—the heels clicked sharply together ; the quick downward jerk of the head, and instant raising of it again as though a snap-hinge united the skull of the magnificent animal to his spine ; the spasmodic motion from one person to another, for to each in turn must the whole performance be strictly gone through with, from the first stiff taking of position to the very end of the hinge movement. Oh how I laughed and almost suffocated in my vain efforts to prevent the entire company from knowing what so convulsed me ! Later we became very good friends—the Herr Lieutenant and I ; he did not *schwärm* for me as much as Heinrich did, and in consequence I found him more agreeable. It was a pleasant life enough ; I worked hard at mastering the language, and enjoyed the walks to beautiful Herrenhausen, and the afternoon concerts under the trees, and the early evenings at theatre or opera. We had seats in the Fremden *loge* near the stage for the better hearing of the German words, and the first tenor, from whom three times a

week I took singing lessons, made eyes at me in the sentimental parts of his *rôle*. It was a new sensation to be made love to so very publicly and yet with no one understanding but myself, and I found it quite romantic. Yes, it was a decidedly pleasant life, even the *Wurst* tasted good, and I learned to drink my little *flasche* of Tivoli beer quite comfortably before going to bed on theatre nights. We were all tucked up and asleep about ten o'clock, the plays beginning there before six, and not having you to dream about in those early days I slept soundly, and was all ready for the day's work when I awoke. A simple, pleasant life, and I like to recall it as I sit in my old room to-day and feel myself so changed.

I liked your description of Avignon. The palace of the Popes I remember well, and a little shrine on the old bridge struck me as so pretty and picturesque that I made a sketch of it which I still have. I saw a good deal, I think, in those few months when I was abroad, but I long to see more, that is the worst of travel-

ling ; the cry is always more, more, and one is never satisfied.

Write to me of all your wanderings ; I can read as many pages as you will send, and not tire of so doing. Adieu.

LXXXII

(Letter missing)

LXXXIII

PARIS, 13th November 1843.

Arrived here last evening. To see you again—can it be possible ! I shall be free all day to-morrow.

LXXXIV

(Letter missing)

LXXXV

PARIS, 13th December.

We are absolute fools, no other word will do. To part friends, to write each to other as

friends, to have reached a wise calm phase of existence, to count upon meeting again as friends with all save happy memories of the past blotted out, and to make an absurd *fiasco* of everything as we did to-day! The contempt I feel for myself passes words, and not to put it more strongly, my respect for you is decidedly less. I write no more after signing myself, as I now do for the last time, M.

LXXXVI

(Letter missing)

LXXXVII

Friday, 14th January 1844.

No, you received no letter from me on Tuesday, for the simple reason that I did not write one, nor did I this year send you a New Year Greeting as I did last. If you have kept my letters—a foolish thing to do by the way—read that one of last New Year's Day over again; if I remember rightly it contains sufficient

tenderness to content a man for a long time. I am rather ill, and have been taking care of my aunt, who is with me, and who is more ill still. This must be my excuse for a short and absolutely uninteresting letter, a thing of ink and paper not deserving the name of letter, but all that I propose sending you, therefore you must, I fear, make the best you can of it.

If you have time for such trivialities make me a sketch of our woods.

LXXXVIII

(Letter missing)

LXXXIX

PARIS, *Sunday, 11th March.*

After all, I find that it will be absolutely impossible for me to meet you to-morrow. I am sorry, but I really cannot arrange the walk, *à bientôt.*

XC.

Thursday Morning, 15th March.

I am so excited I can hardly wait to hear the result. Of course you will be elected, of that there can be no doubt. When I next see you you will be enrolled among the Immortals, and I shall have a grave Academician all for myself! *Dieu vous garde.*

XCI

Friday, 16th March 1844.

Laugh at me if you will, but I could not help it, I cried when it was all over and you were really nominated! I know it was the acme of silliness, but I had worked myself up to a tremendous pitch of excitement; I do not think I could have stood your losing the nomination, for in spite of all you say I feel sure that in your heart you cared about it. You must be so busy I will not take up a moment longer of your time, only send warmest congratulations, best wishes, love. *Adieu, mon vénérable!*

XCII

(Letter missing)

XCIII

Of course I saw what you sent me "*en pleine Académie*," and naturally my first impulse was to screen myself behind the friendly hat of my next neighbour, in blank terror lest she and all the world beside should see it too, and know that it was meant for me! How could you do such a dangerous and compromising thing? and how sweet of you to think of me at such a moment and to do it!

Your speech did not seem in the least too long, and I enjoyed it immensely. But I will write no more; we are to meet soon, in less than an hour now, and I can say all the much that still remains to be said in person. Had I known it was so late I should not have written, this will hardly reach you before it is time for you to come for me. *A vous de cœur.*

XCIV

PARIS, 27th April 1844.

Your last letter was so humble, you yourself so lamblike and mild during our last walk, that the soft and unusual glow of your complaisance still floats around me like a halo. My friends do not know me in this effulgent, radiant state, and I assure you my success at dinners and balls is something quite phenomenal. Does this announcement enrage you, or are you still like the tenderest morsel of spring mutton? As I passed the butchers' shops to-day and saw paper roses pinned on their prize sheep, I was strongly tempted to stop and buy some to send to you at Strasburg.

I am just so happy that it is a pleasure merely to live. Nothing particular has happened to produce this exaggerated state of feeling, but it is in the sweet "youngness" of the year, the tenderness of the first spring foliage, the tiny little leaves uncurling so gently, the life in the balmy air like a pure wine exhilarating but not grossly intoxicating, the butterfly children with innocent

eyes toddling along the Champs Elysées, the sky all dotted with fleecy rainbow-tinted clouds, studding the heavens with sapphires and opals which flash in the mellow sunshine. Only to live on such a day as this is pure happiness, but to live with the knowledge that another heart beats with you and for you, another warm, living, loving human being thinks of and cares for you, ah, *voilà* happiness doubled and intensified. Can you wonder that I am gay when I feel and know all this, and when I am in this loveliest city by the Seine, this brilliant flashing Paris? Come back to me here, and I promise that our thread of life shall be taken up again where it was dropped, as though no break or pause of any kind had come in the weaving of it. Come back to me, but quickly, while the sunshine lasts.

XCV

PARIS,

Tuesday, 30th July.

How long it is since I have written to you, but meeting every day was better, was it not?

better than the best of letters. Now I suppose that little interlude is over, and that we both must "to life again," an outside, other people's life, a noisy, bustling, ordinary life. Well, dreaming for ever would, I suppose, end in softening of the brain, and we still have heads, although for so long now hearts have been trumps. I feel that I must make an effort, and seriously pull myself together, must go away somewhere and show the world, my portion of it at least, that I still do live, and am tolerably sane. How much longer shall you be in Paris? I ought to go to the country almost immediately, but I promise to see you again first.

xcvi

PARIS, 18th August.

You see I am still here in spite of your sarcastic suggestion the other day, that it was quite possible for me to take "French leave." Let me know to-morrow the date when you must leave Paris, that I may make my arrangements accordingly.

XCVII

(Letter missing)

XCVIII

PARIS,

5th September 1844.

After changing all my plans and remaining on here simply for the pleasure of seeing you again, I find our interview of the day before yesterday, and your letter of Monday 3d, just punishment for the *bêtise* I have evidently committed in doing so. You bid me an eternal adieu, "*pendant que vous avez du courage.*" *Merci.* You suggest that we can love each other only at a distance, that perhaps when we have both reached a comfortable old age we may meet again with pleasure, but that while waiting for this millennium you beg I will in both happiness and unhappiness remember you. You also say that no anger remains with you, only a great sadness. You still further add (and the sentence makes me think you must be dying) that you hope now I will pardon you.

For a lately nominated Academician the composition as a whole of this most extraordinary letter strikes me as a trifle weak, if you do not mind my saying so. As an example of French style it may be all right, but in crude English it produces upon my mind the idea of a mental feebleness which is simply incredible, when I remember who it is that writes it. Have you already softening of the brain? I feared it in my own case, should our idle dreaming be indefinitely prolonged, but I did not seriously anticipate it as the end of your career.

Wake up, take a tonic, cut your finger, do anything to regain your scattered senses, and meet me at two o'clock to-morrow, Thursday, 6th September; if you do not do this it will indeed be adieu with a vengeance.

XCIX

(Letter missing)

C

(Letter missing)

CI

D——,

14th September 1844.

From Poitiers you write me that my last letter reached you, but you make no sort of allusion to two previous ones in which were one or two questions which, if you remember, I also asked you at our last meeting in Paris, when after all we did not have that final tragic parting, did not say that eternal adieu, which you were to express while you still had *du courage*! Oh, how infantile we are to quarrel as we do, kiss and make friends, and go on writing as calmly as possible after our little tempests in a teapot. You have a way of not answering questions which is very reprehensible, but it is no use for me to waste time in repeating them, for they were rather frivolous, and anything less frivolous than I feel to-day could hardly be imagined.

There is a man here who interests me strangely, a man who is in great mental trouble, and whom I have met in a most extraordinary way. I do not yet quite understand how it

came about ; how a clergyman of the Church of England should take me of all people into his confidence ; how he ever came to tell me of his doubts and his terrible experience. It was one of those strange confessions which are sometimes made by the most reticent men to the most unlikely of listeners. A mutual friend mentioned his name to me one day as we all stood at the hotel door together, he merely bowed, and a moment later moved away, and I did not give him a second thought. The following afternoon late, I found myself far away from our inn, and a sudden mountain storm came up before I could find shelter of any kind. It was not only an unpleasant but a dangerous position, for the lightning plays odd tricks in these wild rocky districts, and is no respecter of persons. I confess to having been a good deal frightened, and as I looked helplessly about the sight of the tall Anglican priest I had met the day before was a very welcome one, he was at least a human being and a man, and might know of some hut where we could find temporary safety. As it happened

he did, and for more than an hour we were together in an empty cabin on the hillside, used by the goat-herds in the summer-time. The storm increased, and the danger of it was very evident. How it came about, I repeat, I do not know, but the conversation turned upon fear, trust in God, and faith. Shall I ever forget that man's stricken, haggard face as he told me his story! Told me, while the lightning played about us in forked tongues of flame, of his simple, childlike, unquestioning belief in God and Christ, in angels and in an old-fashioned cloven-footed devil. How he had preached the word, and taught plain Christian Bible truths such as he himself had learned at his mother's knee. How, little by little, doubts came, questionings arose, faith became clouded, how the wonderful story of Christianity which he had reverently received, and in which he had reverently instructed others, took gradually but surely the hues of a lovely fairy tale, which man's intellect could only smile at, not seriously accept. How the trouble grew greater and books and study only made it worse, until in

order to remain an honest man he had fled from church and people, taking his nominal holiday for a season, knowing well in his heart that it was a farewell for all time. As the storm increased the man's excitement grew ; I think he forgot that I was there, and talked only to himself or the spirits he recognised in the storm shrieks. Oh, it was awful, the great agony of a soul in doubt. Never can I forget the unutterable horror of it. The tortured pain, the seething agony, the writhing despair of that human soul ! It was an infinity of anguish compared to which the physical crushing of bone or rending of flesh or muscle can be nothing. It was sport for devils, rare mirth for the arch-fiend himself bored with the puny impotence of man in fashioning evil. Rich rare sport for the old pagan to watch a nineteenth-century conscience so saturated with intellectual culture that it had thrown old beliefs to the winds, and denied as fables God and Satan equally. To be doubted must convulse the power of evil with devilish delight, and I can fancy him evolving out of his own

inner devil's-doubted consciousness a rare refinement of revenge for the presumption of this clarified nineteenth-century intellect, even while the anguished soul told of his doubts and of the peace gone from him for ever. The storm cleared slightly, and the lightning ceased. The man before me was still looking out over the mountains with wide unseeing eyes, unconscious, I was convinced, that any one was near him. I hated to leave him alone with his great agony, yet I dreaded more to have him come out of that odd trance-like state, and perhaps remember that he had spoken words before a stranger which he would rather have died than uttered. So very quietly I stole away and left him alone with his tortured soul. It was the kindest thing that I could do. He did not appear at dinner that night, and the next morning very early he was gone.

No, I do not feel frivolous to-day. At this moment I question whether I shall ever feel so again.

This story will not appeal to you, and I much wonder why I tell it, unless it is that the

habit of writing to you all that happens in my life has grown upon me. You need not give me your views of the incident or refer to it. I know beforehand all that you can say, it will only be a repetition of your former words, "Do you believe in the devil? The whole question lies in this. If he alarms you, provide against his carrying you off," and so on to the end of the chapter.

Think no more of my story.

The forests here are like old friends, because they remind me of those near Paris, and of our walks together in them. When shall we meet there? when do you return? I wish that you were here to-day, I would gladly forget in your wit, and your mockery of all things serious, the solemnness of that man's soul-torture, but I said we were to allude to that no more. I could love you to-day as madly as you, even you, could wish, why are you not here? You would no longer jeer at me for being a marble statue, formal, cold, forbidding; it would be the old cry over again only more intensified—"I love you! Love me back!" To-night I hunger and

thirst for you, I love you with every fibre of my being, madly, unfearingly, with a passionate recklessness I have never felt before! Ah, thank God that you are not here!

CII

D——, 11th November.

I have been able to get out of the trip to the Italian Lakes, therefore shall be in Paris about the first week in December. *Sempre a te.*

CIII

PARIS, 4th December 1844.

There is such a passion of antagonism in my soul to-day that I know well the last thing I should do is to write, yet I do write. I was very angry with you when we parted. You are *entêté* to a degree absolutely absurd, and with it all you are very "hard." Do you not know this? can you not yourself feel it, without my being forced to tell you? I have been *très souffrante*, and I know that I am irritable to a

degree. Everything seems going wrong, and the edges of my life are surely more frayed and ragged than they have any right to be, more wofully uneven than the edges of any one else's life. Why cannot we have things when the longing for them is upon us? Before we eat our hearts out with aching vain desire? Before all the gilt is worn off the gingerbread and the cake itself has grown stale and musty? Why not! oh why not! You may think me ungrateful to write this, when one thing is mine which I should prize, and I do prize above all others, and when one infinite happiness has come to me in that we have met again. And you will be fairly right. I am ungrateful, and as I said before, am to-day frightfully antagonistic towards men and things. Why is it, I wonder, that women often wish to be men, but no mortal ear has yet listened to the longing from a masculine heart to be a woman? The Jews carry the idea further still; in the service of their synagogues the males chant in sententious self-satisfaction, standing the while in the main body of the building, "God, I thank Thee that

Thou hast not made me a woman." Above, in the gallery regions, to which the females have been banished, comes the response in much more humble tones—"God, I thank Thee that Thou hast made me according to Thy will." To-day I am not humble, I cannot echo any such self-abasing sentiment, I would be *anything*, I think, rather than what I am. The flowers of life have poisoned petals, their perfume is stifling, not exhilarating. *Bref*, I have blue devils badly, so will write no more.

CIV

PARIS, *Thursday, 7th February.*

Let me hear how the reception at the Academy goes off, that is, if you have time to send me a line.

CV

Thursday Evening, 7th February.

My warmest congratulations. *Vous voici* a full-fledged Academician. I was present at

your reception, but did not tell you beforehand that I was going as you had said you would be nervous if you fancied any of your friends to be looking on. But it went off charmingly ; of what had you been afraid ? And now for a good long walk with the seven-league boots. What hour will suit you best ?

CVI

D—, 15th August 1845.

I am only just settled here, having got through my wanderings in Germany with Madame de C—— very much later than I expected to. The old haunts are pleasantly familiar ; I am quite glad to find myself amongst them once more.

What is it within us that so quickly responds to a real touch of the pathetic ? We read a book, not particularly well written, perhaps rather the reverse, and eminently stupid. One sentence, one small line which comes unexpectedly in the middle of a page, touches us to quick sympathy, hot tears come to our eyes,

and an odd wedge is in our throats. And it is even more marked in real life, this prompt response to pathos. I cried like a baby this afternoon. A peasant girl in whom I took a good deal of interest last summer married a low quarrelsome brute who between drink and temper has made her life a misery, and more than once nearly murdered her in his fits of drunken fury. Now he has done it quite, killed her as surely as Cain killed Abel, but she by a loving lie persisted in saving him from a righteously deserved death by the guillotine. I went to see the poor thing this afternoon, all that was left of her, for she was nothing but a broken up mass of bones. "I fell from the hay-loft, madame, it was so high no one could fall from there and not be crushed, but I do not mind dying, François is so good to me." Until the very end the poor pretty thing kept repeating this pitiful lie which was to save her husband, and she finally died with it upon her lips. Has she been saved or damned by it? Who will dare to say?

Life and its problems are too intricate for

me ; of one thing only do I seem to be quite quite sure, I love you.

CVII

PARIS, 3d September 1845.

In the soft September dark I have been sitting thinking of you, and of our speedy meeting. Two of my friends here are ill, and I have promised not to go over to England without them. The fear expressed in your last letter, therefore, is for the present at least unfounded ; Lady M—— will not just yet have the chance of expounding her theories as to “the baseness of being in love,” and I individually cannot become either more or less English than I already am from contact with *les Anglais*. Whether I can remain here until the 20th, the date you mention as a probable one for your return, is a question. I will do my best, of that you may rest assured. Do take care of yourself and do not work too hard. It is all very well to accomplish what you undertake, but there are bounds to all things, and I

fear you are rather apt to overdo it. For myself, I am splendidly well and the weather is perfect. If only you were here, what walks, what talks, we might have. Do make a speedy end of all your tiresome old *députés* and come back. You say you prefer the court of a despot to the sort of existence you are now leading. *À la bonne heure*, there is nothing easier for you to have. I will be the despot with all the pleasure in the world ; the court shall be that of love, and you shall be prime minister. Come back, and see if you do not like the post.

CVIII

PARIS, 1st November 1845.

It is too lonely here without you ; everything reminds me of the "chill October," which together we found only too full of delight by day and happy dreams by night. I am off for London to-morrow, to pay my English visits while you are sunning yourself in Spain making wicked love to dark-eyed Señoras. Write me long accounts of the country ; it is one of the

many desires of my heart to see it. If you remain in the land of bull-fights and lace mantillas through December, only returning to Paris in January, I should not very much wonder if you found me there on your return. The Scotch visits I have given up ; it is too cold to go so far north, and my English friends will surely see enough of me in the space of time between now and January.

CIX

BEECHWOOD HALL, SUSSEX,
10th November.

It is certainly very nice to find myself back amidst old friends and old scenes after wandering so long, and surely the English have brought the art of living to a perfection unknown in any other land. I confess I take kindly to the smoothness and polished culture of it all, the luxurious homes, and well-trained servants and thoroughly-groomed horses, and the business of life reduced to a well-organised succession of pleasures. There are probably "hitches" of

some sort somewhere, but as a mere guest at delightful country-houses one never discovers them. It was almost dark when I reached the little country station some three miles from this fascinating old place, but a brougham was waiting for me, and a tall footman respectfully handed me a warm cloak and rug, very welcome in the chilly November dusk. After driving along country roads past model cottages and the ivy-covered stone church, we came to a long avenue where the great trees stood like sentinels, and finally reached an open door with a cheerful welcoming light streaming through it, and more tall respectful servitors waiting at the steps. The air of being expected always gives one a pleasant sensation, no matter how often it is repeated. The first hall entered was a tolerably large square one, with an organ standing on one side, a wide fireplace opposite, and one or two chairs and tables. A double oak door and heavy *portières* divide this from the hall proper, a huge apartment with two more fireplaces, fur rugs, divans, lounging-chairs, tall plants, and a billiard-table ; armour and stained

glass windows breaking the length of the walls. From this central hall open innumerable rooms, in one of which I found my hostess and several members of the house party, around a cheery tea-table.

Lady G—— is as pretty and delightful as ever, he looks decidedly older than his age warrants. The beautiful Mrs. W—— is here, also her husband. Poor man, his life is one long apology for the stupid airs she gives herself. There are one or two stray men, an *attaché* of the Austrian Embassy with a very fierce moustache, a delightful man in the Foreign Office, and last, not least, Mr. Gladstone. How he towers above other mortals! I had never met him, and am now delighted at the chance, whether he will deign to speak to so unimportant an individual as myself remains to be seen. Could he only know my immense admiration for his mental qualities and the amount of pleasure he would give me by so doing, he might be persuaded. Every one in the country is talking about him.

More people are coming to-morrow, amongst

others, an American woman who sings well. Some of the party seem to expect great "sport" from this particular guest, and I feel strongly tempted to whisper a friendly word of warning in her ear. But would she accept it as friendly? On the whole, I think the experiment too doubtful to risk, Americans are such an unknown quantity to me. I feel sure that I am going to enjoy my visit; the human elements are interesting, and there is something wonderfully attractive in the combination of magnificence and comfort, stateliness and unconventionality, about the life led in these grand old Tudor mansions standing in their acres of sloping wooded parks. Continental life with all its charm possesses nothing equivalent to it. From here I expect to go to Lord A——'s in Kent, not far from here; I long for your letter from Madrid, and how I envy you the Murillos! *A riverderci.*

CX

PARIS, 18th January 1846.

Can there be any being in existence less interesting than a woman with the toothache, or anything on earth more unpleasant than the toothache itself? I flatter myself that I possess a fair amount of courage in most things, but where a dentist and dentistry is concerned, I own it frankly, I am found wanting. Impossible for me to venture out with my tooth as it now is, and I cannot make up my mind to let a dentist see it.

How good of you to send me so large a donation for the poor family I told you of; but I should not have said anything about it, I intended to help them entirely myself, and ought not to have troubled you in regard to them. You are too generous.

CXI

PARIS, 10th June.

Are you better this morning, less cross than you were yesterday, less dictatorial and more

human? For your own sake I hope so, as I do not propose seeing you for some time to come, it will not make so much difference to me as it must to you. The books I will send a little later, one of them I lent to a friend who has not yet returned it, but promises to do so before this afternoon. What heavenly weather.

CXII

(Letter missing)

CXIII

DIEPPE, 5th August 1846.

In an old worm-eaten book which I once found in a garret, its title-page gone and the name of its author unknown, I read the following legend: "The world was very new, but few people as yet were in it, and those had not learned how much of evil and sorrow and unhappiness earth can hold; they still kept some of the freshness and glad newness of life, too much, so Satan thought as he left his own kingdom

and came to earth for a morning stroll. So few souls had as yet come down to hell that he had plenty of time to spare, and was of far too restless and energetic a disposition to waste the moments in idleness. As he wandered on in the world above, his ill temper increased ; everything looked so fresh and sweet, the few mortals he came across were so simple, so kind to each other, so innocently happy. ' This will never do,' Satan finally exclaimed, ' this is entirely wrong. I shall be defrauded of half my population if this sort of thing goes on ; hell will be horribly dreary unless I can get some of these nice smiling people down there.' It was in a garden that Satan made these observations, and he sat down to ponder seriously and work out some little problem for stirring up these placid mortals that they might the more quickly come to grief on earth, and change their quarters to his domain below. Now, as a rule, Satan did not think much of gardens, although he had a rather pleasant recollection of the Garden of Eden, where his first venture in tempting a woman had been tolerably successful.

But flowers he despised. The very name Forget-me-not absolutely nauseated him ; why not call it constancy at once—a word he hated ; the passion-flower held that within its purple heart which Satan did not care to see, a cross and nails positively made him shudder. The violet meant humbleness, and the lily of the valley modesty, the dark-eyed pansy deep remembrance—pah ! the names disgusted him ; how silly those people were to like such things. But stop ! none of these flowers just mentioned seemed to be as attractive to the men and women or even the children whom he was watching in the garden as still another. What was this sweet fair thing they all seemed to carry, or to wear, or to play with, this proud imperial flower growing in such luxuriant profusion, tinted with every shade from deep deep red to the softest flush of pink, or golden yellow to palest cream and snowy white ? The rose, the royal rose. Men toyed lightly with the roses, women clasped them tenderly to their breasts, children kissed them and stroked their velvet leaves. A light like flame leaped into

Satan's eyes, a fierce lurid light so scorching in its power that men and women said suddenly in surprise, 'How warm it is, how sultry the day has turned, and so quickly too.' And the children languidly stopped playing, and all the roses seemed to droop. Satan left the garden, and wasted no more time on earth ; he had plenty of work to do down below. Going into his well-fitted laboratory he looked with pardonable pride upon the rows of bottles and jars ranged upon shelves, the while carefully selecting one here and there, and placing all those chosen together on one separate shelf. Then when he had enough, he complacently read the labels of those set apart : Rapturous Joy ; Recklessness ; Human Tears ; Heart's Blood ; Mad Delight ; Satiety ; Contempt ; Peacefulness ; Hope ; Faith ; Despair ; Fool's Paradise ; Pride ; Self-abasement ; Distrust ; Agony.

A smile of grim satisfaction lighted Satan's dark clever face. He picked out an empty jar larger than the others, took off the top and placed it beside him, ready ; then he got a larger bowl, a spoon, and a ladle ; then carefully

he poured a certain quantity from each bottle, not measuring them, but guessing pretty accurately just what proportion of each was needed for the hell's broth he meant to brew ; then with his spoon he mixed them all together in the bowl, and with the ladle dipped out the thick blood-red liquid, pouring it into the waiting jar. After carefully covering this, he labelled it in large letters—LOVE, put back the various bottles, chose out of a drawer three or four paint-brushes of different sizes, and was about to leave the laboratory when a sudden thought struck him. He laughed heartily, ' Jove, to think that I had almost forgotten the perfume. This pretty scientific mixture will deepen the colours but kill the scent, which is of celestial manufacture, not intended to stand much handling from hell. I must dust a perfume over the roses after I have painted them, so sweet that it will deceive the most learned botanist, then the work will be complete, and thousands of men and women will come down to me.' Satan at this added to the jar and the paint-brushes a package of fine gold-dust

powder, and left his laboratory, locking the door behind him. His preparations had taken him longer than he had expected, and he had not much time to reach earth again if he would get there at the only moment when it would be possible for him to paint the roses successfully. This he knew would have to be done as evening was falling and the flowers were tired and thirsty from the day's heat. Just at that hour they would drink the sweet fiery liquid with eagerness, but if the dew of heaven once fell and they drank that instead, it would be useless offering them the devil broth. So Satan hurried and reached the garden just in time. The red roses drank thirstily of the sparkling liquid he offered, and their colour deepened to a dusky bloody tint royal in its beauty. The pink ones drank and flushed to warmer hues ; the yellow swallowed hastily, while a living gold seemed to come to their hearts. Only the white ones turned away. They knew that at early dawn they were to be gathered for a burial ; that cold crossed feet, and folded hands, and a pure face paler than

themselves were lying hushed and still, waiting to be strewn with their white faint fragrance before all should be shut out together from the gay world and the sunshine. So sad were the white roses at what the morning must bring that they turned away from Satan and his broth, they would wait for the pearly dew from heaven ; it was the last time they could drink it. Back he went after this rebuff to the red and yellow beauties, dusting them thickly with the powder, giving them all that the white roses had refused ; and then with the remainder of the broth which the sad pale burial flowers would not touch, he coloured the paint-brushes, and tinted each folded leaf and petal, every stem, and even the thorns. These latter amused him hugely. 'To think that God in heaven gives the thorns to love, and leaves me to colour it so beautifully and give it this bewildering intoxicating scent ! His share of the gift will only prick and give pain, mine will bring wild delight and happiness to men and women at the first, and bring men and women down to me at the last. Ha, ha, a

very clever devil are you, Monsieur Satan ;
je vous fais mes compliments.' ”

The legend ended here, or rather the book was torn, and the last leaves missing, so I could read no more, but I never forgot the story, and have often meant to tell it to you. He *is* a clever devil Monsieur Satan, and no mistake.

Just as it happened last year, I got off so late to this place that I much fear I shall be late in getting back to Paris. There are many pleasant people here, and I am amusing myself, but I do not forget to look out for a letter from you when the post comes in. When do you expect to return to Paris? Take care of yourself, and *do not gather too many roses.*

CXIV

(Letter missing)

CXV

DIEPPE, 20th August 1846.

It grows more and more amusing here, and I am interested in watching several *amourettes* in varying stages. One has reached the point

where the Divorce Court will be the only possible ending ; another promises considerable excitement when the expected *sposo* arrives upon the scene ; a third already gives hope of orange blossoms and marriage settlements ; and a fourth is sad. An old story, horribly monotonous, but dolefully miserable. The wrong people joined together, and the right ones discovered too late. There will be no *esclandre*, nothing will happen, only four lives will be, or rather are, blighted. One man will fly to ambition for his comfort, another, eventually, to drink. One woman will worry heaven with her prayers until for very pity's sake heaven will let her in ; the other will grow harder and harder, never really sin, but do more harm by her cold goodness than it is given most sinners to accomplish. I watch them all in turn, as the waves come in, break on the shore, and roll back again to the sea, and I decide that the worst thing in life is its frightful monotony. Are you in Paris ? Let me know, I cannot get there yet. Would it give you pleasure if I could come ?

CXVI

DIEPPE, 1st September.

A new month entered on to-day and I am still here. Your picture of Paris was dreary, it did not tempt me. I think one is almost more delightfully alone with a person they care for when in a crowd and a whirl than when just they two souls are masters of the situation. Perhaps this subtle distinction is what keeps me here, it is almost worthy of you. The sea seems to be sufficient for my every need at this particular moment. Very few people are left in the place, not one who interests me. The *amourettes* and their respective *dramatis personæ* have taken themselves off to other shores, the *plage* is deserted, the rooms at the *casino* empty, even the *petits chevaux* do no more racing for reckless gamblers. Only the sea and I are left, and we are wonderfully good friends. When I am happy and find life all *couleur de rose*, the sea dances and sparkles in the sunlight and laughs with me for joy. When I would dream it splashes gently beside me and

murmurs a low gurgling music that makes my dream go smoothly and in tune ; and when I feel that no gift in life is so good as strength to do and to dare, to battle and to conquer, the sea leaps and roars and towers in high-crested might, dashing everything weak and feeble aside as it rolls on with a noise of mighty thunder. No friend I ever had is so sympathetic as the sea. Until we quarrel, the sea and I, here I shall stop, so write to me here, and miss me, while I love the sea.

CXVII

—, 10th September.

I had to part from the sea after all, a telegram having called me to this God-forsaken place. *Dieu*, how can people exist *en province* ! It is awful. I trust devoutly that Paris will see me again towards the end of the month, or at the latest, in the first week of October. Then I promise to be charming for you, and how good it will seem to be together again. You say that you are doing my picture, or

several of them ; what dress have you put me in, is it *grande toilette*, or *négligée*, or what? I wonder if I can support existence in this awful place until October. If I can only do so without outraging the feelings of my rich godmother, who has promised to leave me her valuable collection of china, it is all I ask.

CXVIII

—, 15th September.

Do not expect me to write to you, I have no ideas, I feel suffocated, and if I stay here much longer I shall make violent love to the *curé*. I should have done so already, only he squints. My godmother fancies that she is consumptive, and dreads a breath of air ; her *dame de compagnie* is really consumptive, and speaks below her breath. The china is maddeningly beautiful, or I could not endure being here a day longer. I never did care very much about my godmother ; she is a *poseuse*. The poor lady companion I am sorry for, only my sympathy frightens more than it pleases her ; she has had

so little in her life, poor thing, that she cannot understand it. The *curé* comes to confess the two old souls, and looks as if he would like to confess me too. Instinct doubtless tells him that he would have the liveliest half-hour he has passed for a long time if he only could do so. Oh, how you must spoil me when I come to Paris, to make up for the purgatorial time I am having in this musty old *château* with two invalids and a cross-eyed priest. If only that exquisite china did not fill the place I should take French leave.

CXIX

PARIS, 8th October 1846.

Well, were you content that I should be so glad to meet you again? You see the starving processes I had gone through in purgatory reacted in your favour, and so famished was I for a little life which was really worth the living that I could resist nothing you had to offer. The rain is coming down in long straight lines,

the drops scarcely separated by the smallest space. I like a perfectly hopeless rainy day such as this is, with nothing uncertain or doubtful about it, only a steady, deliberate downpour which says, "I mean to rain until I am tired, and nothing you can do will stop me." There is something so determined about such a rain that it commands one's admiration in spite of one's self.

That new tenor who sang at the Italian Opera the other night is going to be a success, the papers are loud in his praise, and prophecy wonders for him. Paris is filling up, and quantities of English are here. Adieu, I am tired.

CXX

(Letter missing)

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CXXI

LONDON,
24th February 1848.

I have still no news of my brother, and am terribly anxious. How do you like the new

order of things, and will it last? I am most anxious to get to Paris.

CXXII

LONDON, *2d March.*

Some friends are going over to-morrow, and I have arranged to cross with them. Let me see you either late to-morrow evening or as early as you can the next day.

CXXIII

PARIS, *March 1848.*

No, fortunately I lost nothing by the failure of Messrs. —, but since seeing you some friends have almost persuaded me to leave Paris at once. They think things are growing more serious, and that a revolution is inevitable. Would Paris be safe in that case? I do not want to leave you here and go away myself, yet I can hardly give that as my reason for remaining. Do advise me.

CXXIV

PARIS,

Friday, 10th March.

My sore throat grows worse in this weather,
and I dare not go out. Do write to me.

CXXV

PARIS, 12th May.

I am going away for a few days with Madame de C——, who declares a "milk cure" will make my throat all right in no time. I wish I could come back and find the political trouble over. *Au revoir.*

CXXVI

M——, 14th May.

Now that I am here I hourly wish myself back in Paris. The times are too stirring to be away from the centre of action. Madame de C—— was right in one thing however, the milk cure has done my throat good, I am almost well. Let me know what goes on at the Chambre ; I hope to see you on Saturday.

CXXVII

(Letter missing)

CXXVIII

LONDON,
29th June 1848.

It is growing insupportable to me, absence from you, when you write of all this horrible carnage and bloodshed around you. I hear cannons in my dreams, and fancy you shot, and bleeding, and dead, and surrounded with every conceivable horror. Here in London the idea of going to Paris at this moment is a madness not to be explained, but I must in some way find a plausible reason for doing that very thing without running the risk of being sent to Bedlam, for see you I must. Your letters are my only comfort, but rather a sorry one, filled as they are with such ghastly details. Do be careful. I am sure you run a great deal of unnecessary risk.

CXXIX

LONDON, 6th July.

It is more than provoking, but I cannot get away at present. The season is a very gay one, and almost without knowing it, certainly without intending it, I am knee-deep in social engagements. It is a bore, but it cannot be helped. I do not fancy the idea of France as a Republic—all its traditions are opposed to such a form of government, all its charm lies in the atmosphere brought by courts and kings and an ancient *noblesse*. Here they speak openly of the weakness and timid hesitancy of the king, and think that had he shown more firmness he might have saved his throne. The royal exiles will, I presume, eventually find a home in this tight little island, which holds its own through wars and rumours of wars, and keeps its crown steady, no matter what others tumble off or are exchanged for the red cap of "Liberty." Why could you not come to London for a little? I am sure it would amuse you, and the change and rest would do you good.

CXXX

LONDON,
13th July 1848.

I am in a perfect dread of what may happen to-morrow, please send me a despatch or write at once. There is sure to be an *émeute*, and you seem to have a talent for being in the thickest of these sorts of entertainments. I shall be back in six weeks at the latest ; let us hope that things will settle down by that time, so that we may have our walks in peace. What a selfish sort of animal a human being is ; I fear that I think far more of these walks of ours than of a country's good, *mais, c'est comme ça*. As you may have guessed, you who know me so well, I am hugely dissatisfied with myself to-night ; you will think me selfish not to give up my amusements here (and, frankly, I am enjoying myself), while I feel guilty for not doing so, yet cannot find the courage to break off and come. But let us settle on the date in about six weeks, and with much pleasure do I now accept your invitation to breakfast with Lady —.

CXXXI

(Letter missing)

CXXXII

(Letter missing)

CXXXIII

FERNDALE (on the Thames),
18th August 1848.

London was so hot and deserted that I came down here last week with the R——s, and shall stop with them until I can get over to Paris. It is no use losing your temper because I do not come, and there is less use still in upbraiding me as you do. I am absolutely dependent upon some lawyers who are settling up an estate, and if you wish to know what the word aggravation really means, try and hurry an English lawyer. All I can do is to pray for patience, and row on the river with the best-looking man I can find to accompany me. And the number is not limited ; this pretty spot is near enough to town to allow detained unfortunates

to run down and dine and sleep, or to stay from Saturday to Monday, and constant streams of the kind come and go. Mrs. R—— assures me confidentially that it is the only really amusing life she knows of, far and away nicer than London itself ; and it is not bad, provided the right people get together. If I could see you coming up the lawn, and if after a pleasant chat at tea-time out on the grass under the oaks I could row you on the river until so late that it would be a scramble to dress for dinner, or let you “punt” me lazily along by the banks while I told you how much I have missed you in spite of my London gaieties, I too might find this life as amusing as Mrs. R—— does ; but as I cannot do all this, and am on the contrary restless and anxious to get away in spite of your doubts upon the subject, I do not enjoy the lazy placidity of shady lawns and continued punts as I should under different circumstances. You say that you can give me until the 25th, at three o'clock, and not an hour longer. I feel as if a pistol had been put at my head, a sort of “money or your life” business, your words

are so peremptory. Could I only communicate this startling impression to the lawyer, there might be some hope, but the outlook is not hopeful, and I feel about as cheerful as the dull, brown, slowly-moving river near which I am sitting. There is no sign of a boat, no sound of a human voice, not a glint of sunshine ; all nature is in a neutral-tinted mood depressing to a degree, and I feel more neutral, and more dull and more depressed, than nature. I shall reduce myself to tears if I go on writing, I am so sorry for myself, and I think the wisest thing I can do is to bid you good-bye and go and eat some luncheon.

CXXXIV

D—, 21st August.

Very unexpectedly I had to come here at a moment's notice, but it brings me a trifle nearer to Paris, and any change was welcome, so restless was I growing by the banks of that slow brown river. I am afraid a horribly human sentiment was at the bottom of my restlessness while at Ferndale, a humiliating sentiment to

own up to, but a very real one. Everybody save myself was enjoying life in his or her particular way, or in the words of the story, there were such lots of good times and I was not in them! You see that just makes all the difference. No one likes to see people enjoy themselves better than I do, always providing that I have a "good time" too, and do not have to play audience for the good times of other people. I hope you appreciate the honesty of this statement, and can read between the lines sufficiently to see why a good time for me at Ferndale was an impossibility with your reverend self in Paris. If that is not a dainty way of saying many things in a comprehensively small space, then I know not the art of speech. Friday, or at the latest Monday, will see me in Paris. Adieu.

CXXXV

AVENUE JOSÉPHINE, PARIS,
4th November 1848.

How long it seems since I last took up my pen to write to you, it is quite a strange sensa-

tion, but if you will be ill, and lose this crisp autumn weather which was made for walking, the least I can do is to try and cheer you on paper. I am rather deaf still from the effects of the firing, and was at first frightened by the cannons; it is not unlike living on top of a frolicsome volcano to be in Paris just now, and I am by no means certain that I enjoy the situation.

Of all the queer collections of odds and ends of people, surely the queerest are gathered together in this house. Never before did I stay in an English pension in Paris, and may I never be so weak-minded as to do it again. The extraordinary experiences these humans have had, which experiences they detail and retail until one's ears ache, are only fit for a new edition of the *Arabian Nights*. There is an English widow with her two daughters, and (from their own accounts) every princeling in Italy has tried to marry one or both of the young women during the last winter which they spent in Florence. There is a pretty American woman, far too young and too pretty

to be left to her own devices, who talks pathetically of how "terribly Charlie misses her," but business keeps him in New York, and she feels it her duty to educate the child here that he may learn the language correctly. The child is a baby of three, the veriest little Turk I ever encountered, and will learn a good bit more than the correct pronunciation of the language if his mamma will only stay in Paris long enough, which I fancy she will willingly do. There is a morbid German who gives lessons in Spanish (did you ever meet a German who did not assure you that he could instruct better in every foreign language than a native could?), and who thinks it his duty to experience sensations between times. His latest experiment in feeling was going to the Morgue, and as it had so completely taken away his own appetite that he could not eat, he generously proceeded to take away ours by giving an account of what he had seen lying on the marble slabs under the water-jets. You know it is at dinner-time only that I see this human menagerie, and I find once a day gives me quite as much of them as I

care about. The lady of the house sits at the head of the table in a moire silk dress, a small beehive-shaped cap on her head, all white lace and red ribbons, and wears gloves with the fingers cut off, showing elaborate rings. Whether she burned her hands when she began life as a kitchen-maid, or whether she imagines this to be a purely French fashion to be strictly followed in France, I cannot say. She gives the ladies around her addresses of the best shops, *i.e.* of those where she probably receives a commission on all purchasers sent, and offers to accompany any of the men to the Bon Marché or to buy their winter flannels for them ; then after dinner she presides over a tea-table in the *salon* upstairs, doling out weak tea at nine o'clock while making conversation. One man is delightful. He is, not to put it too gently, the most stupendous liar I ever met, but he lies so charmingly, and with such *abandon* and cheerful confidence, that his conversation is most refreshing. He is an American, a western man, and extraordinarily unconventional. He has been over more ground in a less space of time than any

individual ever compassed before, at least he says so. What he has not seen he describes quite as well as the generality of people tell of the things their eyes have beheld in the flesh, rather better, and skilfully inserts racy anecdotes, or hairbreadth escapes, or thrilling encounters with men and beasts, all of which one knows as a fact to be moral and physical impossibilities, but one enjoys them just as much as if they were truth, simply from the manner of the telling.

Do send me a line saying that you are better.
Toujours à vous. M.

CXXXVI

PARIS, 30th May 1850.

One word for good-bye although it is so short a time since we spoke "face to face." Do not be too radical the moment you touch British soil, enjoy the good dinners they are sure to give you, and accept with a good grace the compliments they are certain to pay you. Remember, when the English say a civil thing

they generally mean it. You rather frightened me this morning with your desperate belief in *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*, and were altogether in such a combative state of mind that you struck me as dangerous; write me all your impressions. How you will hate an English Sunday.

CXXXVII

PARIS, 12th June.

Your letter from London dated the 1st amused me immensely. I am glad you found a vent for your feelings in Hampton Court, and did not allow the atmosphere of the "Lord's Day" to drive you to suicide. Much as I like London, I confess that the Sabbaths there are trying. You do not mention who were your party, merely say "we," and a day at Hampton Court, as I know by experience, may be very delightful or quite the reverse, according to one's companions. I see by the papers that it is cold in England, whereas here it is lovely, but I will not distract your attention from cathedrals

and architecture by rousing disturbing reminiscences of nature's temples, etc. etc. The more closely you attend to buildings there, the more quickly will you be able to return to our woods and forests here, and knowing this I refrain from any word that might lengthen your stay. Adieu.

CXXXVIII

PARIS,
3d July 1850.

Time for only one more letter to reach you before your return ; with how much pleasure do I write this. Your adventure with the man at Salisbury Cathedral to whom you gave half a crown, and who proved to be the person for whom you had a letter of introduction, was extremely funny, but why in the name of all that was wonderful did he keep the money when the mistake was discovered ? His doing so strikes me as more than odd. Well, no more until we meet. Ah, how glad, how very glad, I shall be to see you again.

CXXXIX

D——,

Saturday, 13th June 1851.

I trust sincerely that your mother is going on well ; do not forget that if there is anything I can send her, anything that she may fancy which I can do for her, you are to let me know. You must have been terribly anxious at this last attack, and I have sympathised with you during every hour. The cushion is finished at last, and I send it off this morning. Rest your tired head on it sometimes, and decipher the symbolical design ; you will recognise the tree, the branching shady oak, the figure in the distance, and the cold December sky. Need I point out further the tale the picture tells, or its ending ?

CXL

——, 18th July 1851.

How glad I am that I was able to return to Paris from D——, and to see so much of you there during the last few weeks, for now I have been summoned here ; the poor old godmother

is really ill this time, and I fancy will not be long in following the departed *dame de compagnie* to a better world. If she lingers on I must stay with her, and cannot be in Paris to meet you on your return from London. This will not please you, I know, but it pleases me far less. If you had not been out of town for the day I could at least have said good-bye to you before leaving, but even that was impossible, as you will understand. *À bientôt*, I hope.

CXLI

PARIS,

Thursday, 2d December 1851.

I am terrified, and would give much to be away from here. The people seem to have gone mad, and they say the soldiers are shooting down the populace in all directions. M. G—— will not allow us to venture out, but goes himself at intervals and brings us news. I suppose there will be no chance of hearing from you to-day, but if it is possible let me have a line to-night to tell me at least that you are safe.

P.S.—Our *concierge* has just been brought in badly wounded. For God's sake be careful.

CXLII

PARIS,

Friday, 3d December 1851.

Your note reached me safely late last night, and found me anxiously waiting for news of you. What is this about the President, and is it true that Cavaignac and Thiers are among those arrested? Is Paris to be placed in a state of siege? I send this by N——, and have told him to bring your answer with him if he can find you. I feel punished for my wish so often expressed that if anything exciting occurred here I might be on the spot to witness it. I have seen all that I want to see of political agitations, and one *coup d'état* is enough for a lifetime. It is so much harder to sit quietly at home and only learn of things from a distance. I envy you for being on the spot, and for being in the thick of the fight, but again I implore you, be careful.

CXLIII

PARIS, 23^d March 1852.

One of the best, perhaps the very best friend I ever had, is dead. How simple the words are to write, how unutterable is the depth of their meaning, the infinity of the loss they represent! The world seems so dreary to-night, life looks such a bitter failure, and what is yet to come stretches out in such gloomy empty nothingness. Why is it that those most sorely needed here seem the first to be taken away? It made me feel strong only to be near this friend, she played her part in life so bravely from the moment life thrust a part upon her, never flinching herself, no matter how hard the task set her; never failing others, no matter how severe the test demanded by friendship. No one ever helped me as she has helped, and I am but one of many who could say the same. No one ever had greater trials, ay, and doubts too, than she, yet before the end came she had triumphed over all. Time and suffering, suffering and time, brought redemption at last, but it

came from the conflict fought silently within, not by loud outward wailing and moaning. My loss is very great, and to-night I feel stranded. Even your presence, I think, I cannot bear just yet—a soul must be alone when a great trial comes, the cup of affliction is too small for two or more to share, it is filled for one alone. Adieu.

CXLIV

PARIS, 22d April 1852.

I have followed the course of this "*affaire Libri*" with keen interest, and my pride in you increases at every stage of it. You do indeed understand the meaning of the word friendship. How staunch and loyal you are! Uninfluenced by any one's opinion, and guided only by what you feel to be right! Will it help you through all the disagreeable annoyance of the thing to know that I most warmly and cordially approve every step that you have taken, that I sympathise with you, love you, and am very proud of you?

CXLV

PARIS, 23d April.

If they really condemn you to prison let me know at once. Come to see you there? But of course, arrange that I shall be allowed to do so, and let me know if there is anything that I can attend to for you during all this annoying business. It is M. Libri who is to be congratulated upon having such a friend as you. Command me in any way, and believe that you have my whole love and sympathy.

CXLVI

PARIS,

Saturday Morning, 2d May.

My poor friend, your note has this moment reached me. What can I say, what can any one say to you at such a moment? I know how deep your attachment was to your mother, and although her death was not unexpected, does any amount of preparation ever really prepare us for these partings which leave us so

poor, so beggared of love, so desolate in loneliness? I think not. No love on earth can be so pure as that of a mother for her child, and its infinite tenderness and holiness must, I think, last on and be a blessed unseen shield around him even after its bodily expression has been silenced.

In the first sharpness of loss we cannot realise that it must be better with those who have gone than had we kept them here; but the knowledge, when love is real as was yours, must in time bring a peace and consolation with it. You helped me so much by your friendship when a short time since sorrow came so sharply to me, let me try and help you now when I know how sore and wounded and grief-laden your own heart must be.—Your friend always.

CXLVII

(Letter missing)

CXLVIII

PARIS, *Wednesday Morning.*

I shall think of you all day. Let me know the very first moment that you can after the decision is rendered what the verdict is. If they actually send you to prison it will be shameful on the part of the judges, but will only prove that no man was ever so firm a friend as is Prosper Mérimée. How proud M. Libri ought to be. How proud I am that I can claim Prosper Mérimée as *my* friend.

CXLIX

Wednesday Evening.

The wretches!!! *Quinze jours de prison et mille francs d'amende!* Let me know where and when you can see me.—Your friend who honours loyalty and is loyal to you.

CL

PARIS, *31st May.*

I feel myself to be frightfully guilty because I breathe this life-giving sunshine while you

are behind bars, and I am well and almost cheerful even while I have to take my walks alone and you can take none at all. It must be the pride I feel in hearing every one speak of you as they do, as they could not help doing, for but one opinion exists as to your loyalty, courage, and coolness during the whole of this Libri affair.

But what a tangle of a world it is, where such things are possible. I hope that you received the book safely ; let me know when you have finished with *Beyle*. Think of our not even being able to quarrel !

CLI

—, 11th September.

While you are wandering in Touraine I decided that it would be a capital idea for me to come and pay my respects to the godmother, and at the same time take a look at my (prospective) china. It is all right—the china, not the godmother. This latter is as unpleasantly

wrong as a cross-grained old woman who ought to die and does not possibly can be. No one has a greater veneration for dignified old age, silver locks, and all the rest of it, than I have, and above all things do I delight in a beautiful old lady who wins your love and respect by calm cheerfulness and sweetness as she nears the end of a long life. But I ask you, Can one interest one's self in a querulous, selfish, old creature who is always demanding sympathy for imaginary ills when she is as sound as a dray horse and has not a lovable quality in her whole disposition? No; it is the china, and nothing but the china, which forces even decent outward civility from me to this detestable old woman whose name I bear, and who in my infancy undertook to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil on my account. She could only, I judge, have been persuaded to do so by the hope that my share of such vanities might fall to her, for to things carnal she is wedded until her useless tyrannical old life ends. I know she drove that unlucky woman who had to live with her out of the world by

simple nagging, for never in the whole course of my experience have I found any one such a past mistress of the art. In spite of her assurances to the contrary, she is perfectly capable of altering her will at the last moment, and leaving all this exquisite Sèvres to anything or any person beside myself; hence my penitential pilgrimages to this dreary spot, and my efforts to be entertaining when I get here. Only a day or two longer, however, shall I be able to stand the strain on my temper; then I shall go, I think, to England, perhaps Scotland, for a few visits, devoutly praying that a kind Providence may gather the godmother to her fathers before it is time for me to come here again. Write to me of all that you see and do, and miss me, weary for me as I do for you each day and hour.

CLII

(Letter missing)

CLIII

LONDON,

30th September 1852.

Why will you persist in travelling when you are not fit for it? Your letter has caused me the greatest anxiety, and your account of the sudden attack you seem to have had makes me quite miserable. It is very wrong of you to do this sort of thing. Do return to Paris; I will give up my visits and meet you there at any date you name. I wrote to you on your birthday, but you do not appear to have received the letter; our epistles must have crossed. Now be sensible, come . . .

CLIV

(Letter missing)

CLV

PARIS,

10th October 1853.

Your two last letters, dated the Escorial, 5th October, and Madrid, 25th October, have

both reached me together this morning. Did you carry the first in your pocket until you found a travelling companion for it, or are the postal arrangements in Spain entirely out of order? Well, here they both are, and that is something, very much indeed, for they have given me great pleasure. Your suggestion that if there is anything I wish for I have but to speak to obtain it, is too noble a one for me not to respond to. I much wish for a Spanish fan such as Madame de C—— had, the one whose history you told me. Bring me that, and I will say thank you with effusion. The little flower which you send in your second letter has even yet a faint sweet perfume, and I can fancy it breathing to me some of the thoughts which I know you had in sending it. *Merci, mon ami.* The years as they pass do not, I think, lessen our friendship. Tell me, have I kept the compact well which we made so long ago? No, do not tell me; not on paper at least. A question like that should be asked and answered in far different fashion; hand in hand and heart to heart, with frank

true eyes looking the reply before the words can form themselves in speech.

Your account of the *comédie* which you superintended at Carabanchel interested me ; your young goddesses must have been delightful. I am glad that a little play is mixed with all your work, and that the *rôle* of Apollo has fallen to you in so goodly a company. You have such a wide catholicity of sympathy that as consoler I should imagine all classes come tolerably comfortably within your compass.

The Court has just gone to Compiègne, and Nieuwerkerke was not invited ; they say, however, that he has taken a villa in the town. The Princess M—— is more "Russian" than ever. M. D—— tells me that she encourages her "cousin the emperor" in all that he does. Adieu, *amusez-vous bien, mais*——

CLVI

PARIS, 30th October 1853.

Les affinités électives. I will not forget to remind you of the name on your return, but

do give me some faint idea of when that is to be. Are you going to pass the remainder of your life in Madrid? I shall begin to believe that you have gathered roses there, the reddest you could find, if you do not soon move on to other cities. By all means bring the handkerchiefs, the buttons I do not care for. For your third suggestion, *les jarretières*, know, O sage, that such articles are no longer worn by any woman possessing the slightest consideration for the shape of her leg!

The arrest of Delescluse, *ancien commissaire* of Ledru Rollin, and of Goudchaux, *ancien* Minister of Finance during the Republic, is causing much comment; and they say that other arrests of importance have been made at Tours, Nantes, and Nevers. The emperor is blamed for showing too great clemency to the men sure sooner or later to disturb his reign.

I am glad that at last you will confess to finding beauty in at least part of *Wilhelm Meister*. I think Goethe has put some of his most exquisite thoughts within its pages, yet until now you have always laughed at me for saying so. Ah,

do come back ; writing for a constancy is so poor a compensation for our walks, and the weather here is wonderfully good.

CLVII

PARIS, 25th November.

How absurd you are about the garters ! The *femmes de chambre* were about right to be indignant at the idea of your bringing such things for *souvenirs*. Why are the diplomatic representatives of the United States always extraordinary people who do extraordinary things ? It is everywhere the same story. Remind me to tell you an anecdote of the American Minister in London, which is even more amusing than yours of the man in Spain, or rather of his son. If you die in Madrid, do you wish to be buried there, and shall I come to your funeral ? *Ma foi*, I believe you have discovered that "one friend" about whom you told me so long ago, and that accounts for your continued absence. Am I right ?

CLVIII

PARIS, 1st December 1853.

Just as well, *mon cher*, that you say you have “*tant d’envie*” to see me again, after telling me such a disgraceful story as the one about “*la belle*,” whose shoulders were placed “*à la disposition de V.*” The customs of a country are sometimes odd things, but to this one I doubt not that you took kindly. Seriously, it is just as well that you should return to your native land.

The Court comes back to-day from Fontainebleau, where the emperor insisted upon the strictest etiquette. No one was allowed to sit in his presence, whether he himself was seated or not! Your empress is much interested in the form of spiritualism which makes tables talk. M. Guizot has been instrumental in this fusion of the two branches of the House of Bourbon, while M. Thiers is, they say, furious at it, and is all for the Empire.

When you decide to come back you will find a warm and loving welcome from yours
loyally, M.

CLIX

D——, 31st July 1854.

Your letter of the 29th has just been forwarded to me here. Am more distressed than I can say to learn that you are suffering, also at the news of your friend's illness. By this time I trust you are both better. No ; I have no idea of going to London at present, so continue writing to me here. My plans are very unsettled, and I may at any moment be called to ——, as I hear that my godmother is very ill.

CLX

D——, 22d August 1854.

Louis XIV after the battle of Ramillies said — "*Dieu a donc oublié tout ce que j'ai fait pour lui ?*" What have I done, or left undone, what has Providence forgotten or remembered against me, that so heavy a blow should fall upon me? Can you credit it, when I tell you that that unscrupulous woman, that shameless godmother of mine, has died, actually gone out

of the world, and left no will behind her ! All my promised china, the priceless old Sèvres, for the sake of which I have endured so much, goes to a distant cousin, who has never suffered anything at the hands of the old infidel, for the simple reason that he never saw her. The Château of ——, with its pictures and furniture and plate, all go with the china, everything, in fact, passes into the hands of a man who does not need it, and is incapable of appreciating it. When I remember the weeks and months of boredom I have suffered in the society of that woman, the number of times I have smiled when I could readily have wept with weariness at her querulous complaints, the restraint I have put upon that unruly member, the tongue, that no word of mine might jeopardise the china, I could be desperate in many ways. It really is trying, for the one weakness to which I plead guilty with no reservations is a love of rare china ; and that promised to me by this wretch of a godmother was worth waiting for. Console me by a long letter ; it is all that is left me. If I could be with you in your journey-

ings, see nature in her loveliest moods, and see how each one in turn affected you, there might be hope for me ; but to be here alone (for Madame de C—— has not yet arrived), knowing my china to be gone for ever, and you to be absent indefinitely, is more than I can bear with serenity.

CLXI

D——,

6th September 1854.

The little flower from Innsbruck came safely, and seemed to echo the closing words of your letter—" *Écrivez-moi très-longuement et très-tendrement.*" You must know so well that all the tenderness of my whole being is for you, and for you alone ; but that you should care to hear it anew is not unpleasing to me in the year 1854, when I remember that it was in 1840 the word "tenderly" first grew to be a prominent word in our mutual dictionary. Ah, love, you have loved me well, in joy and in sorrow, through sunshine and with clouded

skies ; "loyal and true" your motto, and unchanging faith your creed. Few women can claim as much, none could ask for more.

I am curious to hear your opinion of Vienna ; it is a place which fascinated me at first merely as a sightseer, when I superficially enjoyed the gay Ringstrasse and the enchanting shops, the curious vault of the Capucine Church, the Volks Garten with Strauss himself as leader of the orchestra, and the procession of Corpus Christi in which walked the emperor, and archdukes, and Hungarian noblemen in marvellously picturesque attire. Later I found in the fair city by the Danube a society more charming than that of any city I know, a hospitality which no other capital can equal. If you once find yourself among the agreeable Viennese, I fear me your return will be a matter of time and patience, the former yours, the latter mine. I know well the fascination of Austrian men and women, and the numerous delights of Austrian life. You will find it *gemüthlich*, and once under the spell of that word you are lost.

CLXII

D——,
1st October 1854.

Your letter tells me nothing. You have not yet reached Vienna! Such as it is, your letter, it has come to me just as I am leaving this place for Paris, where you will find me if you return within reasonable time.

CLXIII

PARIS,
10th October 1854.

Ah, so "really truly" you find Vienna to be "*un séjour agréable*." I should have been terribly disappointed had you thought otherwise, for in so thinking you would not only have thrown great discredit upon my good taste, but proved your own to be very bad. I can scarcely wait for you to tell me in person all your experiences, in letter form they are always interesting and never satisfactory. The anecdote you relate of the Belgian Minister and

Gortschakoff was most witty. Did I ever tell you of having met Prince Gortschakoff at Wildbad? Two amusing incidents are connected with the occasion: one, that the clever Russian paid me a compliment which will remain enshrined in my memory for frequent grateful reference when I grow old and loquacious; the other will be a useful warning to me never to play the part of cat's-paw for ambitious old ladies. The compliment arose from the fact that the prince spoke innumerable languages equally well, reminding me, in his fearless use and ready application of them, of a man I once saw throwing knives at a New Year fair at Neuilly. My own conversational powers were limited in their expression to English, French, and German. One afternoon when Gortschakoff was seated by me under the trees at Wildbad, a very beautiful countrywoman of his own, Princess D——, came towards us, exquisitely dressed, and her hands full of yellow roses. Like most Russians, she too spoke almost every tongue, and holding out a rose she stopped before us saying in Italian with an entrancing

smile, "Your favourite colour, prince; are you not coming to hear the music?" He took the flower, paid her a pretty compliment, and sat down again, while the lady, not overpleased, walked on. "Why do you not join her?" I asked; "she can speak in almost as many foreign tongues as you do." — "*Comment, madame, you would seriously suggest my leaving a woman who can converse with esprit in three languages for the pleasure of hearing silly things said in six by une jolie poupée? You flatter me.*" He slowly pulled the fragrant *Gloire de Dijon* rose to pieces, leaf by leaf, and remained with me during the rest of the afternoon, while the beautiful princess enjoyed the music as best she could without him. Remind me when we meet to show you the photograph of himself which Prince Gortschakoff gave me at this time. It is an oval vignette ridiculously like the one you have of M. Thiers. In signing his name he has spelt it Gortchacow.

My story of playing cat's-paw is a longer one, but more instructive. You may have met Lady M—— (not our mutual friend, however)

in London. You know she began life at the bottom of the social ladder, as also did Mrs. B——, not an Englishwoman by birth, but to-day quite a feature in English society. Well, both ladies desired the attentions of the Russian Chancellor for themselves, and neither wished the other to have them, so Lady M—— encouraged me in keeping the prince from Mrs. B——, which lazily amused me for the moment. She herself, however, was not so much amused at the ultimate arrangement of things, and eventually she became as bitter an enemy of mine as she had caused Mrs. B—— to become, while Prince Gortschakoff bored me in the end, when I found other and younger men to talk to. He soon departed, and I saw him no more; on the contrary, the delightful parties of Lady M—— and the agreeable dinners of Mrs. B—— in London continue, *mais je n'y suis plus*. I wonder whether the cat grew philosophical when she licked her poor burned paw, or whether she sadly and wisely came to the conclusion that in future she would let other people's chestnuts alone?

The L^égitimistes were wild with joy when the news which came from Vienna that Sebastopol was taken proved to be false, and even circulated the report that the English and French had sustained a defeat.

The American Bonapartes, father and grandson, dined with the Princess M—— a few days ago. M. Chaix d'Est Ange was present, and gave it as his opinion, privately, that the marriage of Mademoiselle Paterson, which had been broken by an imperial decree of the first Napoleon, could not be recognised by the present emperor. The ex-king of Westphalia sent for him to consult upon the subject. His Majesty favours the Bonaparte-Paterson claims, and poor M. Chaix is in a terrible quandary, not wishing to displease the powers that be! Adieu.

CLXIV

VERSAILLES, 18th July 1856.

No, the two years that have passed have made no difference ; all that you speak of wishing I will do, even to meeting you in London if it is a possible thing to arrange dates. Let me know just when you will return there.—
Yours always as always, MARIQUITA.

P.S.—What souvenirs there are in every detail of this spot. Have you forgotten? Can you ever forget?

CLXV

(Letter missing)

(His letter CLXV and her letter CLXVI both missing.)

CLXVII

DIEPPE, 29th July 1856.

Not a word from you since your letter dated London, 20th July, and I have been anxious to

hear how you like country-house life in Scotland. If Sundays are bad in England they are worse there. Do write me of your experiences. I am enjoying the sea as much as I always do, but am growing anxious to hear from you. What you proposed to me when we last met I have thought of carefully but cannot yet see my way to approving of the plan. Let us wait and talk it over. I feel sure that will be a wiser course than to decide hastily before we meet.

CLXVIII

(Letter missing)

CLXIX

PARIS,

Sunday, 14th December 1856.

As you tell me to do so, I will send this to Cannes, but fear it will reach that place before you do. Where do you think I spent my morning? At Versailles, where I made a pilgrimage in memoriam. Quite alone I went, for the

hundreds of Sunday sightseers I did not count, they only made the place more lonely to me, besides, not one among them knew our haunts, our shady grove now wind-blown and desolate, our corner of the gallery passed by and hidden from sight. You will ask why I went to look at summer's bloom and living greenness turned to winter's frost and cold. Ah, why indeed? Some restless spirit seemed to urge me on; I felt forced to gaze upon that thing dead which living we must never face again, and what instead do you think I found? A tiny budding root which pierced through the hard earth in our grove, and clear sunlight pouring in through the once fast-closed window of our dusky gallery corner! What does it emblem and predict, this life and light where only stillest memories were laid in darkness? Oh, love, let it mean what light and life should always mean, truth not falsehood, goodness not evil, faith not suspicion. Will you agree to this, and not crush the bud or darken the sunlight? Our letters are sure to cross each other. I wonder if you too have in these past days given

a thought to Versailles and the strange unrealness of the time spent there?

CLXX

GENEVA, 20th August 1857.

Oh this fascinating place, why have I allowed so many years to roll over my head without seeing it? Yesterday we went to the Castle of Chillon, spent the night at Vevay, and only returned here this evening. I took Byron with me, and grew as enthusiastic as even he could have wished over the fate of the lonely prisoner. I could see the "sunbeam which hath lost its way," although as a matter of fact the sun at the moment of our being there was high overhead and no stray beams were wandering about; I felt how "cankering a thing" iron could become as I touched the rings attached to the "seven pillars of Gothic mould," and so fully did I realise the human suffering which had spent itself in vain longings and hopeless despair within those "dungeons deep and old," that I too looked upon Chillon's prison as a

“holy place” and found its “sad floor an altar.” There certainly is an immense pleasure in travelling, not merely in the varying scenes of the moment, but in the store of memories to be garnered up as mind food for future years. We have allowed ourselves three weeks for our trip, at the end of which time I shall hope to meet you again in Paris. Venice is included in our programme ; in fact, I fancy that most of our time will be spent there. I have but one regret, that is, that we could not have made the journey together. This regret will, I feel certain, only increase as the days go on, and will culminate at Venice the first time I glide along the canal in a gondola, where you are not, but where I shall think of you, dream of you, and long for you. Ah, *mon ami*, you must be first always, far away or close beside me, absent and present always my first thought, my one deep happiness, my loyal love.

This ends the letters to which answers are found in the first volume of Prosper Mérimée's *Lettres à une Inconnue*. The first of his letters

in the second volume, to which one of hers applies in answer, is number CLXXII, dated Paris, Lundi Soir, 29 Janvier 1858. Anything of hers between number CLXX and CLXXIV seems to be missing.

END OF VOL. I

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